THE NATION

JANUARY 2, 1960 . . 25c

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MONSTER in the MINE

by IRA WOLFERT

An American novelist brings his craft to bear on the relentless displacement of men by machines -- the key social drama of the '60s.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

THE NORMAN MAILER SYNDROME

by GORE VIDAL

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LETTERS

12/31/59

Dear Sirs:
When I consider how this decade went:
O tempora! O mores! O debris!
The fifties may be folding up their tent,
But what a world of litter's left to me:

What shall I do with Little Rock?
Could I hock that old Woodstock?
Who'll bid on a nearly-new chemise,
A vicuna coat or a spare deep freeze?
Nobody wants Dixon-Yates as a gift:
Perhaps I'll simply cast it adrift
Along with details of the Grace Kelly trousseau
(Was it success that spoiled Harvey Matusow?)
I can't keep Checkers (I've still got Blaze)
Or the Redleg suit from those dear dead days
When only the brave risked losing their heads
And called Cincinnati the home of the Reds.
Where can I stash away Schine and Cohn,
Dianetics and Juan Peron,
Eddy-loves-Debby — but not ever after,
The sputnik jokes (and the hollow laughter),
Offshore oil, payola and Jotto,
"This Is Your Life" and that was "Dotto,"
Julius La Rosa's lost humility,
Recollected in *whose* tranquillity?
The name of the man (any number may guess)
Who promoted the man who promoted Peress,
And Baby Doll sucking her neon thumb
In the burgeoning strontium.

Perhaps I'll merely draw the drip-dry drape
And, being careful not to slam the door,
Say three *nil nisi bonums,* then escape
And never go there any more.

ANDY LOGAN

New York City

Ethic and Dogma

Dear Sirs: Gabriel Vahanian ("This Post-Christian Era," your Dec. 12 issue), is making an acute observation in his declaration that we live in a post-Christian period. He seems, however, to lament rather than to rejoice over this conclusion.

Intellectual emancipation from subservience to theology is to be highly valued. Our problem today is to free our *ethics* from this same subservience. If our age is engaging in a cultural rejection of Christianity, as Mr. Vahanian believes, the reason could well be that Christian thinkers have insisted that their dogmatic view of the universe validated their ethics; now the ethics are being swept aside along with the theological dogmatism.

What we are witnessing is not only a crisis for us. It is also an opportunity. Let us recognize it as such, rejoice in it, and root our ethic in something less transitory than a sectarian view of the universe.

EUGENE WM. KREVES

Plainfield, Ill.

Dear Sirs: Dr. Vahanian recognizes that "every age is post-Christian." But to him, the tragedy of our age is that we are "post-Christian *both theologically and culturally.*" (His emphasis.)

This attitude is characteristic of the very religiosity which Dr. Vahanian so describes in his article. Our Western culture is not so much a reflection of the spirit of Christianity as Christianity is a reflection of our Western culture. (It cannot be denied, however, that there is a dialectic reaction between the two.)

But to dismiss our era as one in which "tolerance gives way to religious syncretism" and to denote this syncretism as having neither content nor backbone is to throw the baby out with the bathwater. The syncretistic content is precisely that body of ethical principles which Christianity has professed with varying degrees of enthusiasm, and which, with a high degree of enthusiasm, has ignored in practice throughout the centuries.

The result of this amalgam of "beliefs and attitudes" will be the living acceptance of the concept of the brotherhood of man, without the ritual and ceremonial trappings.

JACOB GOLDBERG

Chicago, Ill.

Question for Mr. Benson

Dear Sirs: The 86th Congress under Public Law 480 gave the Secretary of Agriculture, Ezra Taft Benson, the authority to distribute surplus commodities through a food-stamp plan to needy people in our own country. So far Secretary Benson has refused to start the food-stamp plan—perhaps for the reason that there is "no depression."

I believe the 5 million underprivileged and underfed people eligible for aid may not understand that "there is no depression." Being hungry and poorly nourished is hard on children, whether or not the Secretary of Agriculture feels that a depression exists.

Since the agricultural surplus is available, and is costing taxpayers billions of dollars for storage, and people are hungry, by what right does Mr. Benson decide that this food shall not go to our own poor?

(MRS.) EVE BYRON WYATT

San Francisco, Calif.

De Gregory Fund

Dear Sirs: May I call your attention to the organization of the De Gregory Defense Committee. Like Dr. Willard Up-

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THE NATION

EDITORIALS

The Problems of NATO

NATO as we have known it may not be falling apart, but it is surely not flourishing. A plausible though not specific explanation is that the NATO of yesterday is not, and cannot be, the NATO of tomorrow. With only occasional exceptions our mass media, electronic and printed alike, are giving the public precious little enlightenment on NATO as an *evolving* organization. It almost seems as if nothing true, honest and incisive can be said publicly about any grave public question, especially where our relations with other governments are concerned. To read the papers, one would think that NATO was being jeopardized by a self-willed Frenchman, General Charles de Gaulle, whose predecessors sent the French army to Algeria and who himself is now administering the *coup de grace* by saying "integration is dead," withdrawing part of the French fleet from NATO command, denying NATO the command of his Air Force, and refusing to permit U.S. weapons to remain on French soil unless he has a voice in their disposition and possible use. The United States, in virtuous contrast, has put at the disposal of NATO its military forces, its treasure and its sacred honor. We integrate, de Gaulle balks, and even Eisenhower can't move him: according to what Joseph Alsop vouches for as an "excellent source," the recalcitrant de Gaulle received Ike's protestations with a silence that was "glacial, even hyperborean."

All this, though partly factual, is utterly childish as explanation, and can only reduce the American TV listener and newspaper reader to an even lower level of understanding than he has achieved previously under the tutelage of these media.

In the first place, the United States is willing to integrate — partially — because the NATO commander is an American general. The integration is only a token one since the Strategic Air Force is not under NATO command and Congress would blow its collective top if anyone suggested that it should be. In sum, only a minor portion of American air, naval and land power is under NATO's jurisdiction, and Britain likewise has committed only a portion of its strength to the alliance. De Gaulle has done nothing that the Anglo-American partnership — itself somewhat tenuous — has not done before him.

Second, conditions are changing rapidly both inside and outside NATO. All NATO can do is conduct a brief holding operation if the Russians move; the Strategic Air Command must do the rest. In other words, if the Russians move seriously (for resisting a probing operation, NATO would be useful) mutual suicide has been achieved.

Third, the preponderance of power within NATO is shifting from the United States to Germany. The Germans know it, the French know it, and de Gaulle is making his preparations accordingly. Four years ago, 6,000 volunteers joined the German colors; today the *Bundeswehr* has 290,000 men in the field with seven ground divisions, eight fighter and fighter-bomber jet aircraft wings, and the beginning of a modern navy which will soon be ready to challenge the Soviet Union in the Baltic. That army will be no Turkish land force armed with rifles and cannon and with hardly more industrial backing than the Confederacy had in the Civil War. A first-class military power is re-emerging on the Continent, manned by a new generation which knows nothing of the horror and anguish of World War II and thinks that war can be glorious. What do we expect de Gaulle to do? He has demonstrated more prescience than most statesmen. The maxim is, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em, and, with due caution, he has

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done precisely that with the German Federal Republic.

But he is not irrevocably committing his forces to the coming German-dominated NATO or any other grouping. He is, in short, doing approximately what General Eisenhower would do if he were a Frenchman. This process will continue, and what the United States should be doing is making similar far-sighted preparations for the future. These preparations must center not in NATO, but in negotiations with the Russians. And could it be that de Gaulle, if not Adenauer, has that same thought in the back of his head and means to do his own negotiating, rather than let the Anglo-American partnership act as his agents? It is a hypothesis not to be dismissed out of hand.

Most Virtuous of Men

By now it must be a truism that the only virtue that matters is anti-communism, and by that standard Syngman Rhee, the aging tyrant of Korea, is the most virtuous of men. So excessive is his excellence that he may well get us into even more trouble in the future than in the past. There was, for instance, the time when he released a great force of prisoners of war who, by the terms of the Korean armistice, were to be allowed to choose whether to return to North and South Korea. If the Reds had stood on their rights, the war would have been renewed, and perhaps the third (and first thermonuclear) world war would have ensued. These potentialities remain. Little attention is paid to them by our opinion artificers: it is a disagreeable subject. Consequently the man in the street, raw material of the laborers in the opinion vineyard, has a blank mind on the subject — which will not protect him if the lid blows off. Unmolested, Rhee maintains his military dictatorship, in which he tolerates an opposition as long as he can keep it impotent. Now eighty-four, he intends to rule, like a king, as long as he lives. His dictatorship is supported by American dollars — some four billion in the last six years. The flow had better be maintained, Rhee warns: "People willing to sacrifice their lives for democracy must be encouraged." The bulk of the money has gone to build a 630,000-man Republic of Korea Army with a trained reserve of 800,000 — for a nation of 22 million. That little else has been accomplished is shown by the economic state of the country. It could scarcely have been worse off under the Japanese. Imports last year were valued at $284 million, exports at $17 million. Corruption is rampant. The Korean armed forces are under American command and two understrength American divisions, the First Cavalry and Seventh Infantry, are stationed in Korea. This is the only bright spot in the picture. They had better be kept there, lest Rhee take it into his head to resume the war. It would be the crowning achievement of his long, troubled and troublesome life.

Honorable Discharge

John L. Lewis is retiring. "The strength of man is a prideful thing," he once said, "but the unfortunate thing is that strong men do not remain strong." He himself was an exception. As he nears eighty, his former enemies pay tribute to him.

It was not always thus. Down the years Lewis was called a traitor, a revolutionary, a fellow-traveler of Communists. He gave considerably better than he took. President Truman: "a malignant, scheming sort of individual . . ." Vice President John Garner: "a labor-baiting, poker-playing, whiskey-drinking, evil old man." William Green: "I have done a lot of exploring of Bill Green's mind and I give you my word there is nothing there." Until the later years, sweet words were not exchanged between Lewis and his adversaries, and even today the memory of the terrible blows lingers on. It is a fitting exit march. For what are better measures of a labor leader than the enemies he has made and the abuse he has received?

Lewis was not only a tough guy with his fists and with a phrase. He was also an industrial statesman. Running the labor end of a declining industry, he saw clearly that resistance to mechanization and automation would be futile, that the only hope was to increase output and reduce costs. He geared wages not to hours, but to output. The result is fewer miners, shorter hours, higher income and greater security. If the society cannot employ the displaced workers, so much the worse for them, but it will be even worse for the society, especially when it is confronted by a competing system with a built-in labor shortage. [See "Monster in the Mine," by Ira Wolfert, page 5 of this issue.] Lewis perceived all this with little help from scholars and administrators. A clear head and a stout heart pass from the scene.

The Apalachin Conspiracy

A federal jury in New York has convicted twenty of the defendants accused of conspiring to obstruct justice by lying about the nature of the underworld meeting held in Apalachin, New York, two years ago. The verdict has been hailed as a great victory in the endless effort of law-enforcement agencies to break up the mobs and syndicates engaged in organized crime. But in several respects the Apalachin case constitutes a disturbing precedent. The key to the government's successful prosecution was the ruling by Judge Irving R. Kaufman that when the police stopped and questioned the guests who had assembled at Joe Barbara's plush hill-top mansion, their action did not constitute an arrest. If the defendants had in fact been "arrested," the arrests would probably have been illegal and the government would not have been able to use the "fruits" as evidence at the trial. But what is a citizen to do when he

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is told by a police officer to stop? "Arrested" or not, he had better stop. A second point to be noted is that if the defendants perjured themselves, it was in the sense of either remaining silent during repeated and prolonged interrogations, or of giving answers which the government denounced as "preposterous." Many statements, however, sound preposterous which are not, in fact, false. It should also be noted that the police who broke up the meeting did not know its purpose; nor, subsequently, did the prosecution. A group of men — very dubious characters no doubt — had peacefully assembled for a purpose not stated or proven; on the face of the facts, they had a right to be where they were.

All of this smacks too much of the notion that any club can be used if it is used to beat a dog. But apart from the dangerous precedent that will be established if this verdict is upheld on appeal, government agencies should be scrupulous about the kinds of weapons they use, even in the so-called war against organized crime.

You Pay Your Money— But Where's Your Choice?

If you can find this item in an American newspaper at all, it is probably hidden away among the shipping notices, but in the Canadian papers it is well up front and in at least one case under a streamer headline all the way across the page. The armed forces of the United States found that they were losing more men through automobile accidents than they had lost through enemy action in Korea. They also found that exhortation was next to useless. In this dilemma, some denizen of the Pentagon came up with a sound idea. The Department of Defense engaged a well-known research organization, Dunlap and Associates of Stamford, Conn., to make a study of 1,000 cars owned by an insurance company and assigned at random to salesmen. The cars were of two makes among the "low-priced" three, which presumably means Ford, Chevrolet and Plymouth. Dunlap arrived at an unexpected conclusion: "On the basis of these results, it may be strongly inferred that automobile design contributes appreciably to accident rate. There was an increase in accident rate of more than 50 per cent from make B to make A, which is directly attributable to accident-design properties."

Fifty percent! If you could reduce your chances of sudden death or crippling injury in this ratio, wouldn't you do it? Doesn't everybody owe it to himself and his family to get rid of, or not to buy, an unsafe car? But you will inquire in vain which car showed up well and which showed up badly. The Pentagon doesn't say. The taxpayers footed the bill for the investigation, but they are not entitled to the results. Business comes first, and civilians must take their chances. But must they? Perhaps members of Congress who prefer whole constituents to dismembered ones will pry the lid off. Or some consumer research group may undertake a survey taking in all three of the "low-priced" leaders. The matter should not be allowed to vanish in thin air. [See "The Safe Car You Can't Buy," by Ralph Nader, *The Nation*, April 11, 1959.]

MONSTER IN THE MINE . . *by Ira Wolfert*

Statistic: America is still using the same amount of coal, but only a third as many miners. The reason is the machines. Fifteen years ago the American miner was the champion of the world at six tons a day. The operator of a continuous miner digs and loads three tons a minute.

THE MODEL of the continuous miner we had sold takes about five hours to unload and set up and the boss wanted his trucks back as fast as he could get them. He offered a bonus of $10 a driver and $25 to me if we used only one day. So we started out at 11 at night. That should have brought us to the mine at noon and, with daylight to work in, we'd have had time to make it back by 7 the next morning.

But we were hardly out of Clarksburg when it began to rain. It came down just hard enough to put a slick on the roads. Those southern Appalachian highways are not a pleasure at best, but in that kind of rain they amount to no more than snakes wriggling up and down the hills. There was not enough rain to keep the windshields clean. I had to stand out on the running board on the driver's side and we couldn't do better than low low going down all the hills and their slippery bends. It made the going up even slower. We hoped the sunrise would burn off the rain or dash it down hard enough to wash the road, but it did neither; and by 10 o'clock we were still a good six or seven hours from the mine.

We stopped at a diner to let the salesman telephone the customer. He was the only one who went in. The boss was in such a hurry he had agreed to pay time and a half for the meal hours if we spent them rolling. But when you stop after such a night as I had had, you feel the load

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IRA WOLFERT is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and the author of An Act of Love *and other novels. This story, which has much basis in fact although liberties have been taken with names, places, etc., is included in Mr. Wolfert's next book, a study of contemporary America at work, which Simon and Schuster will publish in March under the title* An Epidemic of Genius.

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you've been carrying. The drivers didn't mind. They were being spelled, one driving while another slept. With me though it was as if not only the continuous miner but the three trucks carrying it had been lifted off my back, down low where the hip bones come in, and I kept my eye on the salesman as he went to the telephone. If he stopped for a cup of coffee, I was going to follow him and say, "Say, that's a good idea."

THE salesman was in no hurry on this job. He had to stay with the continuous miner for a week or more to get the bugs out and train local crews to operate it. But he went right to the telephone anyway and came straight out, stopping only to pick up a toothpick. He walked slowly like a man with a full belly and even after we got rolling again he was still working the toothpick in his clean, dry teeth with the look of one whose mind is idling in neutral while the rest of him is digesting something.

"There's been a change," he said. "We'll go straight to the hotel and unload in the morning."

"What's the idea? Isn't the juice turned on at the mine?"

"I don't know, but that's what the customer wants."

"Did you tell the boss?"

"In my line the boss is the customer."

"Maybe in your line, but in my line the customer don't pay bonuses."

He shrugged and broke the toothpick in his fingers and threw it out the cab window.

"No sir," I said, "we go straight to the mine. We'll have a half-hour or more of daylight to get a good start, and finish up under lights. That way we can still make it back in plenty of time if the rain stops and we're running empty. Hell, we'll unload under the headlights if he hasn't got the juice on. We can move the trucks around to put two sets of headlights on the one we're working on."

"That's not going to light up the woods on the hills around the mine."

I stopped thinking for a minute. Everything in me stopped.

"The customer says he wants everything left on the trucks tonight," continued the salesman, "and all the trucks parked in a bundle at the hotel."

"Well, well," I said at last.

"That's right."

Now it was my turn to shrug. I couldn't blame the miners for wanting to destroy a machine that would take away their jobs. But neither could I get their point — maybe because machines have always given me jobs, and the continuous miner my company makes is such a beauty in the way it works you never get used to watching it. But then a new thought came to me.

"Who's going to pay for the hotel tonight?" I asked. "Because I'm not sleeping in the trucks tonight and nobody is, not under these conditions."

"Nothing's going to happen."

"You bet nothing's going to happen, not to me. I done all my shooting for my lifetime in the war."

"There's not going to be no shooting. They'll shoot off their mouths is all. I know. I've seen it before."

"All right, but who pays for the bed in the hotel for the whole crew?"

"Don't worry. I'll sign for it and put it on the customer's bill."

"Now you're saying something, because I'm going to give those mine boys plenty of room to do whatever they want tonight. My job is just to give them the machine. What they do with it is their business, as far as I'm concerned."

"They won't do a thing, you'll see."

"How will I see? I'm not even going to look."

Still, I was not only scared but sad. There was no hurry any more. We took it easy all day. I smoked a cigar after lunch. But the day was so gloomy it gave the owls insomnia. I heard them hooting now and then, waked up by the twilight-colored light. I got a laugh out of thinking how they must be wondering, as the twilight went on and on hour after hour. It looked as if the clock of the universe had run down. But the tiles in the rest room that we took advantage of when we stopped for gas were dripping water and the salt in the diner where we ate lunch wasn't just damp. It had water in it and there was water in our hair and running into our eyes when we drove.

Oh, you hate to see a beautiful, amazing machine tool bring misery and bad feelings to people. Yet you also hate to get your head broken in. And that's the way I kept going all day long — up and down, sad and scared. A funny thing happened. Wise, Hazard, Paintsville, Beckley, Logan, Kingsport and the other towns we went through — each one became Liège to me, lying in the rain at the bottom of a long, snaky, forest road on a weepy wet day. I knew where I was. I knew Liège was fifteen years ago, but I could hear the tank treads squeaking in the damp stillness like a thousand mice. I couldn't help myself. Each time we'd start down the hairpin turns to reach a town at the bottom, I'd catch myself looking sideways into the woods at the shapes of the mist drifting among the trees. I had to laugh when I caught myself doing it, but it did no good to try to laugh it away. I'd be lost. I'd be in another world in another lifetime. I wouldn't know where I was. Then, at the bottom, I'd wake up with a start and realize I was all tensed up and crying inside. It hadn't been the murdering that had bothered me so much on that day when we had brought freedom to Liège. It was the fact that on such an errand I had to be afraid in the midst of all the sadness of hills and trees in a dark gray rain.

II

THE MINE operator had told his men nothing. He was an heir. The only thing modern about him was that his coal seam was getting down to where it didn't pay to work it by the old hand method and so he had had to buy a continuous miner. For the rest, he was strictly prewar. I had heard about bosses like that. My father knew them. A union is just a mother-in-law to them. It comes along with what they want and instead of taking it they're always bickering and nagging and hoping it'll drop dead. They seem to think that if you explain to your men that you're risking a lot of money in automation to keep some jobs going instead of shutting down and putting everybody out of work, it's the same as asking their permis-

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sion to do it. "Who the hell are the men?" That's their attitude.

So the men had been half hoping we were only a rumor being circulated to set brother against brother. But they had been out in the rain all day anyway, waiting to see whether we were true or not. They had waited at the mine until late in the afternoon and then had come drifting into town. We saw them as we went rolling and swaying down Main Street. There were small groups lounging against the store fronts and the grapevine must have been working good because there was a large group across the street from the hotel. They all stood silently in the seeping rain. They watched silently as we pulled up with a roar in front of the hotel and climbed down and stretched.

The police were waiting for us and so were some gun-thugs the mine operator had armed and deputized. The thugs were getting $6 a day and "expenses," the same as in the old union-organizing wars of the thirties. Nothing ever changes for men like that and they never change either, I noticed. They had been belting their expense account so hard they could hardly stand up. The salesman tried to make out it was all clean fun. "Ah," he said, breathing in deeply as he walked across the sidewalk to greet the police and their deputies, "I see you gentlemen been gettin' you some real sippin' whiskey." But when they laughed, their breath was so strong it made the salesman look a little cross-eyed.

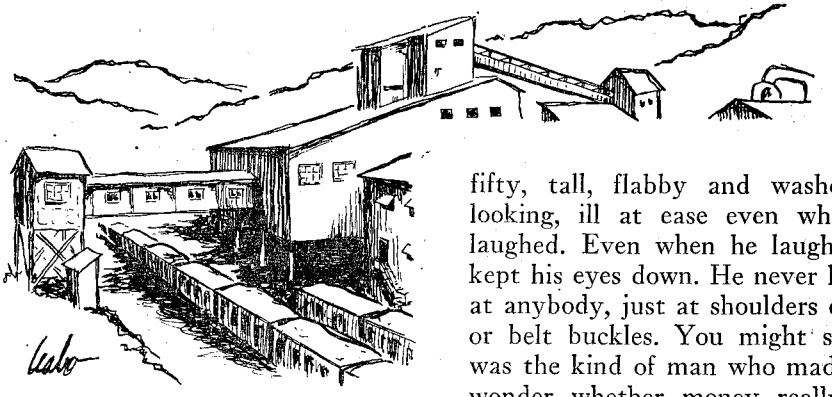
The police told us to pull the trucks around to a yard in back of the hotel. They staggered after us as we drove, their hands on their guns. But the men across the street made no move to follow and made no sound. They did not even speak to each other, just watched silently. When I came back I saw they were still there, watching where the trucks had been.

III

THERE WERE two eating places in town — the Dining Room in the hotel and the Café on Main Street.

Since I was on an expense account, there was no doubt in my mind where I was going to eat. But, as I started for the Dining Room, I could hear it rumbling from afar. It was the businessmen. There were big doings going on and, to be in on it, they were all in town for supper that night. When I got into the middle of their rumbling, I could feel its jollity and unction. It was like being in the crowd at a hanging.

None of my crew was down yet, so I went out to the lot in back where the trucks had been parked. There was nothing to see, just the cops and the tarpaulins slick with rain. But the businessmen kept coming out to have a look. You could tell how they rated at the bank by the amount of wheedle in the smile with which the chief greeted them. I was surprised to see that there were quite a few who didn't rate high at all. To judge by the way the chief welcomed them, they didn't even make the $24 a day that coal miners make nowadays. They were just coat-tail grabbers. But that's what they all were, even those the chief knocked himself out to show the wet tarpaulins to. A $135,000 continuous miner was a big deal to them. True, it wasn't a deal they were in on. But it was a deal for men only, not for boys, not for women, and they were in on that. They were men. It seemed to give them a growly,



turkey-cock way of talking and standing around and after a while I couldn't take that either and went back into the hotel to see if any of my boys were ready to eat yet.

The salesman was down. The mine operator, his superintendent and the local banker had surrounded him and were taking him from group to group. We had heard a lot about the mine operator from the chief of police. It seems the man was just a would-be everything, even at being an heir. Thus far it was his widowed mother who had done all the actual inheriting — from the operator's father and her own. It added up to quite a few million dollars' worth of properties and the old lady ran it from a wheel chair in her house, using her son only to run errands. When there was anything important, the superintendents and managers took it up directly with Mama.

THE son didn't seem to enjoy that. But, whenever it happened, all he did was get a brand new $100 bill from the bank and go down to a whorehouse across the state line where booze was legal. He'd give the bill to the Madame and say, "Mama, I want a lot of mothering tonight and when I've had $100 worth you put me in my car and send me home." They kept a wheel chair there for him that he had bought and he'd ride around in that, cackling and screaming falsetto and trying to run over the girls. The wheel chair folded back flat into a bed, too, when he had worked himself up to that. Then the Madame would telephone the chief and he'd send a deputy down to drive the operator home.

The man's life must have been hell. It showed on him. He was about fifty, tall, flabby and washed-out looking, ill at ease even when he laughed. Even when he laughed he kept his eyes down. He never looked at anybody, just at shoulders or ties or belt buckles. You might say he was the kind of man who made you wonder whether money really was everything — maybe what you have to do to get your money counts for something, too. The salesman knew as much about him as I did. Yet there he was, working hard to be a success with the mine operator anyway. The salesman was a trained engineer, but he had studied up on Dale Carnegie to learn how to gladhand the customers and he had that glad hand stuck out and working like a pump handle, just as if the

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story we had heard about the mine operator had passed right over his head.

It was painful to see. The whole crowd of them gave me a pain, and I decided I'd rather spend my own $1.65 and have supper in the Café.

IV

IT WAS raining hard now. The streets were empty. The union had called a meeting and everybody was there or home. But you could feel a seething in the quiet behind the wet boards and bricks, behind the steamy plate-glass windows of the stores on Main Street.

There was no one at the tables in the booths in the Café. A stringy-haired blonde sat motionless behind the counter and only one customer sat on the stools in front of it. He wasn't eating, just sitting there. His name, I learned after a while, was Harry. He was a short, compact man with a gray face and black hair that had only a few flecks of white in it. He was dressed in city clothes that were not stiff new, so I knew he wasn't a miner. But neither did he look like a traveling salesman. I decided he must be one of the bookkeepers or store clerks around town. He swung around on the stool to face me when I came in and the woman stood up.

"You with that continuous miner?" he asked me. Before I could answer, he said, "If I was you I'd turn right around and go back where you came from."

"I can't make a living doing that," I told him.

He looked away unhappily and began to tremble. I saw then that his black hair was a fooler. He was an old man. I figured out by the time the evening was over that he must be about the same age as the mine operator, but he had lived too long a lifetime for his body in those years. His hair had stubbornly remained young, but the rest of him was all dry and hollowed out.

"Then you want trouble," he said, trembling.

"I don't think I want trouble."

He spit at the floor right by my feet and glared at me.

I had half a mind to walk out, but there was only the hotel to go to and I didn't know which was worse, to be rumbled over or spit at. "What's eating you?" I asked, after a moment.

The woman interrupted. She had put down a glass of water and a knife and fork and spoon. "Do you want the blue plate or something special, like ham and eggs?"

"Ham and eggs will be fine if you turn the eggs over."

The woman wheeled around busily and disappeared through a swinging door into the kitchen.

"Why don't you eat in the hotel where you belong?"

"Look, mister," I said, "I don't know who you are, but if you want to try to stop the twentieth century from happening, you go right ahead. Just leave me out of it. I'm hungry."

"So you're the twentieth century. What do you think I am?"

"Oh no." I laughed. "You won't get me that way. I'd need a gun to tell you what I think you are."

"All right."

MY HEART turned over in me and nearly stopped. He had taken a mail-order pistol from his jacket pocket, a $96 Ruger Blackhawk .44, and had leaned over and put it on the counter in front of me. Then he sat back, trembling more violently now, even his eyes trembling as he sat looking up at me from the stool. "Now you can go ahead and tell me what you think."

"I think you're a kid," I told him slowly. "I think you're a kid who's been watching television too much. I'm bringing civilization into your mine and a chance to make a decent living and you treat me like a wild animal that you got to shoot. So what I think is that I think you're the wild animal and they ought to shoot you."

I pushed the gun back to him.

He took it after a moment and put it back in his pocket. "It's not you," he said. "I sit here thinking of them all up there in the hotel blowing on their cigars. . . . I ought to blow those cigars right up their——." He stopped short and glanced around, worried that the waitress might overhear the word he had been about to say. But she was still in the kitchen.

It touched me that he should be concerned to remain a gentleman in front of a lady, even while he was trembling. "Why don't you try blowing on one of my cigars instead?" I said, and took one out of my pocket.

He didn't reach for it. I had to put it in his hands. He didn't even look at it, just held it and stared at me suspiciously.

"I'll buy you a cup of coffee, too," I went on.

"What for?"

"Because I know how you feel. That's why I'm here instead of at the hotel. But I don't like to eat alone."

When the girl brought my ham and eggs, he lit the cigar. Then he took a cup of coffee. I told the girl to bring it to a table in a booth and carried my own plate over. After the coffee, he had a plate of chili beans. He picked at it nervously, but as we talked on, the tension subsided in him until it was just simmering. After the chili beans, he had a plate of noodle soup and, after the soup, the blue-plate supper — pot roast and mashed potatoes. He even mopped up the gravy on the plate with some extra bread that I made the girl bring.

"You got a pretty good appetite for a man sitting in a restaurant and not eating," I said.

"I forgot what I came in for. I was waiting for the union meeting to end and I just came in out of the rain. I thought maybe it would settle me down a bit to sit a while. But I haven't thought much about eating for ten days now, ever since I heard you fellows were coming."

After the pot roast he had apple pie and I asked him what line of business he was in. He told me he was a business agent for the United Mine Workers of America. His father, he said, had been a coal miner and so had he been, back in the 20s. But then he had joined the union and in the 30s, when the big drive to unionize the southern mines started, he had got into organizing work. He had been teamed with another organizer, a man named Fred who had had to quit the mines when he lost a leg under a coal car.

They went from hill town to hill town, spreading the word of the com-

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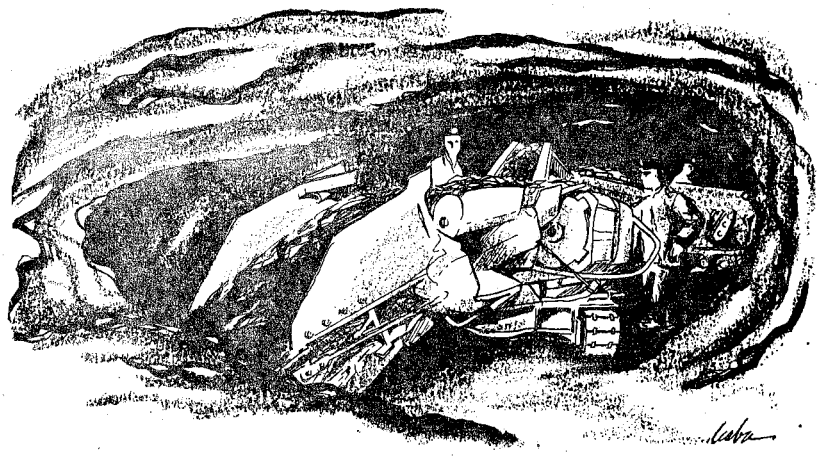
ing of a new order in working conditions. I had a feeling for that. Now it was the machine tool, but then it had been Harry and Fred. They always slept together in the same bed in the hotels in those hill towns. That was for defensive purposes, and Fred had whittled a peg leg for himself out of hickory, the best wood for clubbing and slugging that the area grows.

It could seldom be more than clubbing and slugging, Harry said, because the hotels did not care to have shooting on the premises and since the hotel owner was usually one of the high-up businessmen in the town, his desires were catered to. Instead, they'd drag off the organizers and shoot them in the hills out of town. That is, they'd shoot an organizer if he was foolish enough to carry a gun. For then they could claim self-defense.

BUT NOBODY could make a claim of self-defense against a wooden leg, not without getting laughed out of town. So Fred had had his wooden leg made as thick in the calf as a chopping block and the ankle long and slender like a bat handle. It became famous in a dozen counties. At night, Harry would swing the bed around so that it faced the door and Fred would sleep on that side, the outside, with his wooden leg unstrapped but in the bed beside him. When their room was broken into at night, Fred would jump up on his knees until Harry had got around to his side where he could help balance him if Fred had to start swinging. Then Fred would come out of the bed and, with a mattress to rest his stump on and Harry to lean against, he was dug in real solid.

They always locked their door and braced a chair under the knob, so that even if the clerk gave the thugs the key they'd have time to take up the position they'd rehearsed. Fred would stand and heft his hickory leg. "Come and get me," he'd say. So "Come and get me" became famous, too. The kids used to yell it at each other when playing.

Their fame began making Fred nervous. It was a help all right among the miners they were trying to organize. John L. Lewis was only



a celebrity to them, but Fred became a hero. But that only made him more of a challenge to the mine operators and he was a man who had lost a lot of his confidence anyway when he had lost his leg. He had gone into organizing work mostly to prove he was still the man he used to be, but, if he had been, he wouldn't have had to prove it. I had seen the same thing in the war and, where the man is lucky enough to get away with his proof, he's not harmed too much. He might even be helped. But that much luck was too much to expect when a man becomes identified as the personal target of all the big-money owners in a dozen counties.

ONE NIGHT they were in a town where the mine owner himself owned the hotel. Business was so light there that Fred and Harry could be given a room on a floor where they were the only guests. The mine operator suspended the rule about shooting on the premises, but it would have been a little hard to explain even to the kind of judges they had how you shoot down a door in self-defense. So the two organizers were given a room one flight up and, when the whole town was asleep, the thugs crept along an alley and threw a dynamite bomb into the window.

It only hit the window frame and bounced back, blowing up outside and making the thugs scramble for their lives. But the roar of the explosion in the midst of his deep sleep drove Fred right out of his mind. He leaped out of bed and tried to run with his wooden leg in his hands, going out of the room and down the hall in big, berserk hops. The stairs were too much for him. He didn't slow up for them and fell at the first step, rolling all the way down to land with a crash in the lobby. Then he lay there sobbing his heart out and, while he sobbed, Harry picked up the wooden leg and strapped it on him.

HARRY and Fred were arrested and fined for "indecent exposure." They had forgotten to dress before running out of their room and the management complained they had appeared in the lobby in their underwear. Harry laughed when he told me this. That is, his thin, bloodless-lipped face, so gray and frail under the strong black hair, laughed. But his eyes were glittering as from tears. "Does anybody remember 'Bloody Harlan' where you come from?" he cried.

"I come from New York originally," I said.

"So, does anybody in New York remember Bloody Harlan?"

"Let me tell you something, Harry. There are more people in New York who remember than in Harlan itself."

"How do you figure that?"

"Well, just think how many people there are in Harlan. Five thousand? Why, there's more than that in one building in New York."

"How about Whitesville and Bluefield? How about Pocataligo, Black Betsy, Lost Creek?"

"Never heard of them."

"How about East Tennessee?"

"Never heard a thing about it."

"Then you listen a minute."

It got so, he said, it made no difference the organizers were not car-

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rying guns. They were shot anyway —in "self-defense." Then a pistol was planted on them. It didn't happen once or twice. It was a regular thing. In one Kentucky county alone—Harlan—there was an average of a killing a week during the years when the union was getting started.

"You should have seen those pistols them cheap mutts planted as evidence," said Harry, and the effort to keep his voice down had made him start trembling again. "They were a dollar when they were new, and by the time the operators bought them for the deputies to use as evidence they were so gone they couldn't have fired a single bullet without blowing theirself up. But, what of it? They didn't have to prove anything. Money proved it all."

Harry wanted Fred to stop after the episode of the dynamite bomb. But stop was more than Fred could do and then, one night, when the gun-thugs broke in, they were equipped for him. They had a tear-gas gun. Fred and Harry jumped up as usual. "Come and get me," said Fred, and then saw them lift up the tear-gas gun. He could only stand there hefting the wooden leg helplessly. Harry could only stand there. They aimed the shell directly at Fred's good leg, mashing it so bad that it just dangled from strings.

Then they dragged them down the stairs, across the lobby, across the sidewalk and threw them into a car. "Jesus Christ," Harry heard one of them say, "keep him off the upholstery. He's bleeding like a pig." Then he felt Fred being thrown on top of him where he lay stuffed in against the floor and the car owner complained. "Look at that, it's coming in the side of the cushion."

"Shut up, we'll buy you a new car," Harry heard the other fellow yell, and the car owner answered, "What with? That five-dollar bill you still owe me?" They kept on like that all the way out of town. But maybe it saved Harry's and Fred's life. For instead of taking them far out where their bodies would be hard to find, the thugs pulled them out of the car just past the edge of town and just beat them instead of killing them.

It was a sex orgy. They beat Harry and Fred with Fred's wooden leg. It was rape with a wooden leg. "Come on, say it," they kept slobbering greedily. "'Come and get me.' Say it!" There was only underwear between Harry and the club but they tore that off to beat him because sex had come on them. Fred was unconscious from loss of blood before the beating started. When finally Harry fainted, they hammered the leg to pieces on a boulder by the side of the road. A doctor, sent out to pick up the bodies, found a splinter sticking in Fred's rectum and another in Harry's.

THAT WAS the end of Fred's job as an organizer. The veins and arteries in his one good leg had been so mangled by the shell that it had to come off. The union gave him a desk job. But Harry hated to take even a vacation. He had fourteen bones broken in his body. His kidneys were pulp. Even after he had been sent home from the hospital to convalesce, he was still pulling long strips of sloughed-off kidney tissue out of his penis with a tweezer. All the same, as soon as he was on his feet again, he bought a revolver that was a foot long and weighed more than two and a half pounds, and went back to organizing.

I got goose-bumps when Harry admitted that was what he had done. It was like seeing a flag come out. I'm a union man myself. I know all about the crooks. I know everybody is in a union nowadays only for what he can get out of it for himself. That's the only reason I'm in it and, if I were situated so as to get it as a free-rider, maybe I'd be a free-rider. Maybe not, but more likely yes. Still, when Harry said he had gone back to his job after all that, I don't know, I just felt I was in front of the flag.

"Whenever I saw one of their gun-thugs," he told me, "I didn't care where I was, even on Main Street in full day, I took my gun out of my pocket and held it in my hand. I walked along that way, minding my own business nice and quiet, but keeping my finger on the trigger and my eyes on them. I never had a bit of trouble once."

For the sheriff and the deputies who had beat up on him and Fred, he wouldn't just walk by. He'd stop. "Come and get me." He didn't say that, but only because he didn't think of it. They got the message anyway. He'd just stop short and stand there with the revolver in his hand and all of a sudden they'd remember something they had to do and would walk away. They knew he was ready to die for what he wanted to do. But for them it was only money. Most men are willing to live for money, but there are not many willing to die for it.

I thought I'd tell Harry a few things I had learned. "Do you know who paid your wages in those days?" I asked him.

"The union."

"They just passed them on to you. The northern mine operators paid them."

"That's what the companies here said."

"They were telling you the truth. I know."

"I don't care."

"It's the truth. You study a little history and you'll see that Mark Hanna and the big mine operators started the United Mine Workers' union themselves because 60 per cent of the cost of a ton of coal is labor and, with a union, they could standardize that cost. They could use every workingman as a cop to stand guard and make sure the labor cost remained the same for everybody. It ended all the throat-cutting among the northern operators on prices and then, in the 30s, they put up the money to do the same thing in the southern mines. The cut-throating on prices was getting bothersome to them."

"I don't care who put up the money," Harry said. "Some say it was the operators, some say it was the Communists. What do I care? Money and prices—that was the least of it."

But I had my own ideas about that. The southern mines weren't really organized until the war came along to make price-cutting unnecessary for anybody. That was when Harry started to prosper in the union. His only child, a daughter, became ambitious to go to college. The other girls were reaching only

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as high as nursing or business school, but she wanted to go to a regular college—not to study anything special, just to become educated. It took a while for Harry to understand, but finally he did. Oh Lord, he must have been proud! She didn't want to get a good job. She wanted to become an educated lady. It must have made Harry feel he had accomplished something more in life than just getting a few extra bucks for himself and the other men.

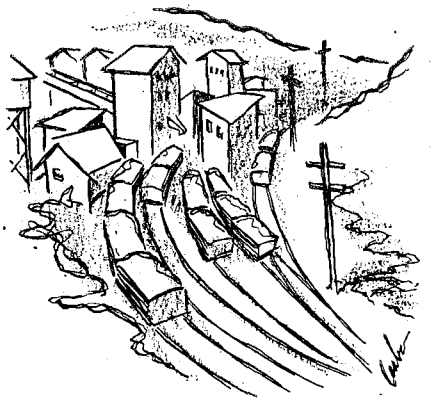
The southern Appalachian winters are raw and muddy. Sometimes ice forms in the pools on the banks of the Clinch. The spring time is just as muddy and only a little less raw, but suddenly the gray, old, scrawny hills burst out like young girls in new dresses. There is yellow and green wherever you look. The dead leaves in the woods rise up to cover the mud spongily. You walk on springs in the woods and the sap and the young leaves smell good as berries. To go out among the trees is like airing the winter out of your soul and giving it a spring cleaning.

YET ONE evening when spring was in full surge Harry returned home to find his daughter drenched in such a storm of shame that she couldn't face anybody. She had closed herself in her room. Spring fever had hit her—for the first time in her life, to judge by the way she carried on. She had been truant from school for three days. One day on account of spring fever. Two days on account of being too innocent to figure out how to lie her way back. On the third day, a letter had arrived from the principal of the high school: was Barbara ill?

Her mother wanted Barbara punished. She knew what Harry had had to go through to rise in the world to where his daughter could aspire to go to college for no reason but to become an educated lady. The woman had had to go through plenty herself. But Harry was rather relieved over what Barbara had done. She had seemed too good to him. She was going into a world that at best turned angels into people. It was better, he had felt, for those who loved the angel to put a few callouses on her innocent heart in advance before the world started to hammer on it. But how does a father do that when he has but one angel, and she a girl? Yet here Barbara was, turning human all by herself.

All right, I'll talk to her, Harry told his wife, and went upstairs to his daughter's room. There was no lock on the door. He walked in without knocking, as was his habit. There was a quick flurry, a scramble and Barbara was under the bed. Come and get me. Barbara didn't say a word, but the words were in Harry and for the first time he felt a little frightened.

He got down on his hands and



knees to look under the bed. Barbara buried her face in the floor. Harry lay down on the floor alongside the bed and began talking to her, trying to show her she wasn't the worst criminal the world had ever known. Figure it out yourself, he told her. The principal must have sent the letter the first day you were absent. The letter had come on the third day, so she must have written it on the second day and on the second day she could have had the report only of the first day's absence. Now ask yourself, continued Harry as his daughter's face remained buried in the floor under her bed, why she was in such an all-fired hurry to shoot out that letter. Because she knows spring fever, Harry went on. Everybody knows spring fever. I played truant myself plenty of times and so did your principal, I bet. So did your mother. Your principal knew that spring is the time for the epidemic of spring fever, and was all set to move fast before it got out of hand.

But Barbara was in deeper trouble than just talking and reasoning could cure. She somehow had got the feeling that she had to be better than anybody. Harry kept on coaxing her out from under the bed. It must have been like trying to coax a bird out of a tree. But finally she came and when he held her in his arms at last he almost broke down himself. Her face looked as if it had been gouged and trampled on by tears. Her eyes looked scalded to blistering. She never could look school in the face again. She wanted to be dead. Harry had to promise to go with her in the morning himself to talk to the principal.

The next morning he called the office of the local to tell the boys he'd be in late. Then, while his wife was fixing breakfast, he pulled the car out of the garage. They heard Barbara moving around upstairs, but she wasn't down yet when Harry went into the kitchen. He wondered, would he have to bring her down by hand? "Bibby," he called. There was no answer, but it was all right, she had got up her courage, he felt. He heard her feet scurrying toward the bathroom and heard the bathroom door close.

He sat down to breakfast. Well, he reflected, the next time, instead of going through all that suffering, Barbara would just tell a lie, and so we learn, so we learn, he thought, so the world turns angels into people. The most unexpected thought came to him then. It came into his mind like a fist: the bathroom door was the only one upstairs that had a lock on it. Had he heard the lock turn when Barbara closed the door? He listened. It never occurred to him that, if the lock had turned, he had heard it minutes before and could not hear it now. He sat straining to hear whether he had heard the lock and he heard a shot. He leaped to his feet, but his legs wouldn't stand and he had to hold on to the table. His wife screamed. She stood in one place and screamed all the strength out of herself, screaming over and over again at the top of her voice until she fell unconscious. Somehow they both knew instantly what had happened. The angel had fled the world. While his wife screamed, Harry didn't know where he was, except drowning in her mouth. But when she fell over with a crash, he saw he was walking upstairs on

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wobbling legs, and began to think again. "Darling," he thought, "my darling, I must go to my darling." But he knew that Barbara had got hold of the revolver he had bought for his organizing work and, at his call to her, had been galvanized to run into the bathroom, lock the door and kill herself. Except for target practice, it was the only time the gun had been fired.

THE ENDING of Harry's story was so relentless I forgot to breathe. He had been having trouble talking. Swallowing had got in the way of his words. He had kept swallowing as if the tears were running down inside his face into his throat. His eyes started blinking. It was like a twitch out of control. He couldn't stop blinking and he bowed low over the table without a word, without a breath, and rubbed his hands over his thighs in a keening motion.

Had there been something left out? I wondered, or something Harry did not know about, something between mother and daughter, something between daughter and ambitions, between daughter and friends? Had something more happened during the truancy than just an airing out of the soul? The answers could not possibly make any difference in comparison with the irrevocable thing that had happened, but I kept asking myself the questions anyway. It kept me busy. It warded off the mangling pain that had invaded me. Then I saw that Harry had taken his massive cannon-like revolver from his jacket pocket again and was holding it in his hand.

"Is that the one it was done with?" I asked.

"Yes sir, it is," he replied. "It's the very one."

There was sweat on him now. It seemed to be on his scalp, too. His black hair had become blacker and younger. It made his face look so white and pinched. Even the tip of his nose was pinched together now. His lips touched each other bloodlessly, like a dead man's.

"Put that away," cried the stringy-haired blonde from behind the counter and both of us jumped.

I had forgotten anybody else was alive. I had seen the woman every now and then fussing behind the counter or among the booths with preparations for the rush that might follow the union meeting. But mostly she had been out of sight in the kitchen. They had been having a gay time in the kitchen with nothing else to do and every time there had been an especially loud outburst of laughter she would come out and fuss, a tight smile on her heavy face, her colorless eyes darting about nervously. "Not so loud, girls," I had heard her say once when she went back into the kitchen. "We're waking up the mice." I got the idea she was one of those secret laughers. I've known people who feel real pain when taken unawares, when a laugh comes out of them where somebody else can see. They have to sneak their pleasures, or it becomes pain; and when they're having fun in a crowd they have to keep ducking away to see if anybody is watching. They don't really look. They just pretend to look, as if they have to, as if fun can't be fun to them unless it's a sin. That's the way the counter girl was. In all her comings and goings, I don't think she really saw us sitting there in the booth and eating and talking. But she did see the gun. It didn't seem to alarm her. She hadn't cried out. She had just scolded.

EVEN as he jumped, Harry stuffed the gun into his pocket. He was as obedient as a good child in front of a teacher.

"Don't you play with that gun in here," scolded the counter girl.

I turned and stared at her. Her voice fell. Her eyes fell. She began to putter at things behind the counter. After a moment she went back into the kitchen.

"What do you want to carry that thing around for?" I asked Harry.

He looked at me steadily, without blinking.

"I ought to have you locked up," I said.

"Go ahead, I won't stop you."

For a moment I felt he might want me to call the police for his own good, to stop him from doing what he didn't really want to do. Then I felt he was daring me to call them. Finally I realized he was begging me. He was begging anybody to let him use his revolver. They had made him buy it. Now he wanted them to pay for it as he had.

"All you want is to give it a workout, don't you?"

"I been thinkin' about it all day long."

I noticed that in his emotion he had suddenly taken on the hill accent that had been natural to him in his youth.

"You ought to think about it some more," I said.

"I been thinkin' about it for ten days, ever since I heard you were coming."

I stood up. He kept his eyes on me.

"Go ahead, call them," he said. "I won't do a thing to stop you."

"I'm beginning to think I can rely on that."

"You can. But don't come back with them. You're not in this and you'd better stay out."

"Oh, cut it out," I said. "I'm not sicking any drunken cops on you."

I walked across to the counter and rapped for the girl. "Let's have some more coffee," I told her when she came out.

There was a glass pot on a little gas stove behind the counter and she turned to it.

"In new cups," I said.

She turned in surprise. "Not freshenings?"

"No, and pour it out here. I'll carry it over."

"I'll have to charge extra if you want new cups."

"If you have to, then go ahead and do it and, while you're at it, clear off our table."

She flushed angrily. She seemed to take my request as a reflection on her and, I suppose, in a way, it was. I had come suddenly to dislike her intensely, or rather dislike her indifference to Harry's story. It was unfair, of course. But that's the way I felt and I stared her down and then stood over her, holding the two cups in their saucers, while she cleaned away the last of our supper dishes and wiped the table. "Put out fresh napkins and spoons," I ordered.

She drew herself straight up as if slapped. Then she noticed that both Harry and I had taken our coffee black and had not used the spoons she had set out earlier. "These spoons are clean," she said.

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I put the cups down and swept the spoons to the floor so violently they hit among the stools across the room. "They're dirty now," I told her.

She retreated in fright and I followed her. "Are you paid to work, or argue?" I said. "Let's be people here. Let's put out some napkins and spoons. Make out you're feeding men, not pigs at a trough."

I took up the cups again and waited for her to obey. Harry said nothing. He looked only at me as the girl worked. I did not put the cups down until she had made a setting for them.

"My wife is a very good housekeeper and I guess it's got me spoiled," I told Harry as I sat down.

"My wife has been like a dead woman ever since we lost Barbara." His coffee was cool enough by now, but he had taken up a spoon and was stirring it rapidly, looking down at it as he stirred.

"I can imagine."

"She's got the radio going all the time, and the television. We get very good reception now, except on 8, ever since we went in on that community aerial. It's only $6 a month, but I'm going to stop it, I think, maybe, some day. We never look. We just turn the set on."

"Are you still working for the union?"

"Oh sure, it keeps me hopping all day. But at night we just sit around. I bet if an undertaker walked in he'd think we were waiting for him."

He was still stirring his coffee, as automatically and rapidly as, before, he had been blinking. "Why don't you drink it?" I said. "It must be getting ice cold."

He lifted the cup to his lips obediently and gave a noisy suck, like a child at the breast.

"If you're still with the union, how did it happen you're not at the meeting tonight?"

He put the cup down. "What for? I know what they're going to do."

"What?"

"Nothing."

"Does that mean you don't want to tell me, or they're going to do nothing?"

"That's right."

"What's right, that they're going to do nothing?"

"What do you think?"

"If I knew what to think, I wouldn't ask. They say it's union policy to welcome mechanization."

"That's right."

"Then if you're working for the union, why are you afraid to come out and say it?"

"I say it. We don't go along with Mr. Lewis on all things. When he went against Roosevelt, there was nobody with him, only the operators. But what he tells us about union matters—everybody is with him a thousand per cent."

"And John L. Lewis says you got to sit still for these continuous miners?"

"For any mechanization. We got to let mechanization take away all the jobs it can, and explain to the men that's the way to have some jobs instead of none and that in the long run there will be more and better jobs than ever, like wherever mechanization has brought the prices down."

"That's a fact, in the long run. But in the long run we'll all be dead. Is that the way the men feel?"

"What's the difference how anybody feels. Mr. Lewis is right."

"Do you think so, too?"

"I wouldn't give Mr. Lewis a single minute of my time if I didn't. Listen, he's got more brains in his little finger about coal than all the operators in the country got up their whole backside. The dumb morons, he's saved their business single-handed and they don't know it."

"If you feel that way, what are you doing here instead of at the meeting?"

HIS VOICE had been in high gear like a man making an old-fashioned Fourth of July speech. Now suddenly it was as if he had stalled.

"There's others there, explaining the rights of it."

"What others?"

"Others, from the district as well as the local. I told the district we might need help and they sent real good men down, real high-up leaders."

"But, don't the men here know you better? Wouldn't they take it from you better?"

He shifted in his chair. He turned first to one side, then to the other. It was a slight gesture, but it tore at me. He seemed like a man in a cage who had gone first to one side, then the other, looking for a way out that he knew in advance he would not find.

I leaned toward him. I didn't know what to say except that I understood. But I didn't know how to say that and suddenly the door behind me banged open. A group of men stamped in, shaking the rain off their clothing. Oh God! I thought. It was the chief of police and about two-thirds of his drunken deputies. My hand flew out instinctively toward Harry.

BUT HE sat motionless. He had taken in the temper of the men at a glance. The union meeting was not over yet, but they already had the news. The mine operator must have had a spy at the meeting who had gone running as soon as it was certain. No strike. No violence. Mechanization had won.

The deputies had lost: $6 a day, plus expenses. "What'll it be, boys?" their chief cried with joviality so fake his grinning face looked green. "I say black coffee all around—on me." It was quite a come-down from sipping-whiskey and done swift as snatching the bottle from the lips. But all that was wanted now was to keep the deputies off the street while the meeting was breaking up, and the operator was doing it as cheaply as possible.

Harry began stirring his cold coffee again, his face old and pinched under its young hair. He had lost, too. Or, had he won? Now the pistol could go back in the drawer, but was that victory or defeat?

Had the men come out of the meeting fighting, the union would have got them back into line eventually. John L. Lewis himself would have come down into the hills to take charge personally, had that been the only way to hammer the men's brains back into their heads. But in the meantime Harry could have used his pistol on the gun-thugs, to keep them out of it while the union was working on the men. It would have meant his death, but that's why he had put his revolver in his pocket. Is death victory or defeat when a man elects to die for his work in life

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instead of merely succumbing to life?

For ten days now Harry must have been asking himself that question, unable to think of anything else, even of eating. He would not go to the meeting to speak up against what the union wanted, but neither would he go and speak up in favor of it. Let the men decide. Let fate decide. Let the guilt of decision be on the shoulders of others. Harry had enough to bear in his cage without that, too.

But the men had decided nothing for him. The question remained. The man who is willing to die for his work has to be willing to live for it, too. But, is living winning or losing?

Harry sat quietly, his head bowed over the cup, one hand working the spoon steadily, intently. Around and around went the spoon in the cup, as did the dilemma in him. But there was no dilemma. I had learned that in the war. There is no winning in life, and no losing, not really, only continuance in a state of obedience to forces that don't know a thing about us. Maybe Harry knew this, too, and had just invented his dilemma in order to keep from knowing that he knew it. Because this is nothing a man wants to know unless he's an old man whose forces are letting go of him.

"What do you think, excitement all over?" I asked at last.

"Seems like."

With a sudden gesture he lifted the cup to his lips and drained it without pausing. He wiped his mouth daintily with the clean paper napkin. It was only when he put the napkin down that his hands began to tremble again. "I better get over to the meeting," he said, and stood up. "They'll be wondering where I've been."

"What are you going to tell them, that you were playing truant?"

He looked down at me for a moment. I flushed. I could have bitten my tongue off. I had only meant that he should now stop acting childish, but I could see that there had come into his mind for the first time the idea of taking his daughter's way out. I knew it must be the first time from the startled way in which it had hit him.

But he put the idea away. I guess he did. I hope he did. I think he did, because of the way he walked out of the Café. He took a straight line close to the booths, keeping away from the counter where the gun-thugs were sitting and not looking at them, yet showing he knew they were there the way a man can show, in the manner in which he skirts it, that he knows the dog dirt he's not looking at is there. Of course, he'd put the idea away, I assured myself. Here was a man who had done a man's work all his life. He had gone on being a useful person in the face of everything. A few thoughtless words from a stranger couldn't make him change suddenly.

WHEN I paid the check, the counter girl took the money and I apologized to her for having lost my temper. She looked so funny I had to laugh. Poor woman, now that I was crawling, she was ready to rub my face in it, but she was too busy to say even a word. She could only purse her lips for a moment of righteousness before hurrying back to wait on the gun-thugs. "Well, you boys can sleep safe and sound tonight," the chief called out and he looked so funny, too, I had to laugh again. He seemed to think it was he who had kept the peace and I ought to thank him for the great victory he had won.

Then, at the hotel, I saw the businessmen all standing around as if it was they who had done it. Even the mine operator looked as if he wasn't going to have to run off to his wheelchair in the whorehouse for a week at least. I had to laugh a third time —but this time at myself. I hadn't done a thing for Liège except come down the hill getting shot at and roll a German aside when I saw him lying quietly, either dead or unconscious, I never found out which, in the middle of a little fire that incendiary bullets had started in his uniform. I put the quiet little fire out, and that's all I did, except keep going. Yet when the fighting was over I ducked off to the best hotel in town, the *Suède* itself, as I remember, and demanded the best suite to take a bath in. Somehow I had felt entitled to it because I had been with the men that had done the winning. Now I caught myself feeling exactly the same. All the master race had been dead or prisoners by the time I had reached the lobby of the *Suède*, but that smell of cold lard they used to give off while lording around had still been present. Now, somehow, I was smelling the same smothering smell again and again I wanted the best suite.

Harry, if you're still alive, if you can hear this, listen to me: you did the fighting and you won. You won for all of us.

Still, I keep asking myself: what did he win for himself? What does any man in this stinking, rotten world win in the final end — except for others?

(*Continued from inside cover*)

haus, just sentenced to a year's imprisonment in New Hampshire, Hugo De Gregory faces jail for refusing to answer the Attorney General's questions. De Gregory, however, invoked the Fifth Amendment. New Hampshire passed a state immunity law which took away his privilege without in any way relieving him of liability before the federal courts. The Supreme Court refused to accept his appeal, with only Justices Warren, Black and Douglas dissenting. New Hampshire Attorney General Louis C. Wyman hailed this decision as "breaking the back of the Fifth Amendment."

Inquiries and contributions would be gratefully received by the undersigned.

Mrs. Priscilla di Giovanni
De Gregory Defense Committee
Box 103, Hanover St. Station
Boston 13, Mass.

Best Peacemonger

Dear Sirs: Your editorial, "The Theme Is Peace," in the December 19 issue, is absolutely right in saying that the Democrats could exploit the peace issue to far better advantage than the Republicans. And their best candidate for this major task would be Adlai Stevenson. It was Stevenson who, almost four years ago, had the courage to make the banning of nuclear-weapons testing a campaign issue. It was Stevenson who, a year ago in Moscow, suggested to Mr. Khrushchev that he visit the United States.

On the peace issue — as on many others — Stevenson stands ace high.

ALLEN KLEIN

Mt. Vernon, N.Y.

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The Norman Mailer Syndrome

ADVERTISEMENTS FOR MYSELF. By Norman Mailer. G. P. Putnam's Sons. 532 pp. $5.

Gore Vidal

I FIRST heard of Norman Mailer in the spring of 1948, just before *The Naked and the Dead* was published. He was living in Paris or had been living there and just gone home when I arrived in France, my mood curiously melancholic, no doubt because of the most dubious fame I was enjoying with the publication of a third book *The City and the Pillar*; at twenty-two I should have found a good deal more to please me than I did that spring and summer in the foreign cities. I do recall at one point Truman Capote telling me about *The Naked and the Dead* and its author: a recital which promptly aroused my competitive instincts . . . waning, let me say right off, and for reasons which are relevant to these notes. Yet at that time I remember thinking meanly: so somebody did it. Each previous war had had its big novel, yet so far there had been none for our war, though I knew that a dozen busy friends and acquaintances were grimly taking out tickets in the Grand War Novel Lottery. I had debated doing one myself and had (I still think) done something better: a small cool hard novel about men on the periphery of the action; it was called *Williwaw* and was written when I was nineteen and easily the cleverest young fox ever to know how to disguise his ignorance and make a virtue of his limitations. (What an attractive form the self-advertisement is: one could go on forever relighting one's image.) Not till I began that third book did I begin to get bored with playing safe.

I took to the field and have often wondered since, in the course of many excursions, defeats, alarums and ambushes, what it might have been like to have been a safe shrewd custodian of one's talent, playing from strength. I did not suspect then that the ambitious, rather cold-blooded young contemporary who had set out to write the big war novel and who had pulled it off would one day be in the same fix I was. Not safe. Not wise. Not admired. A fellow victim of the Great Golfer's Age, then no more than a murmur of things to come in the Golfer's murmurous heart.

My first reaction to *The Naked and the Dead* was: it's a fake. A clever, talented, admirably executed fake. I have not changed my opinion of the book since, though I have considerably changed my opinion of Mailer, as he himself has changed. Now I confess I never finished *The Naked and the Dead*. But I read a good deal of it. I recall a fine description of men carrying a dying man down a mountain; but every time I got going in the narrative I would find myself stopped cold by a set of made-up, predictable characters taken, not from life, but from the same novels all of us had read, and informed by a naïveté which was at its worst when Mailer went into his Time-Machine and wrote those passages which resemble nothing so much as the prose poems of Weary Reilley in *Studs Lonigan*.

Sourly, from a distance that year I watched the fame of Mailer quite surpass John Horne Burns and myself, as well as Truman Capote who had made his debut earlier the same year. I should explain for those who have come in late or were around then but inattentive that the O.K. list of writers in 1947 and '48 was John Horne Burns, Calder Willingham and myself. Capote and Mailer were added in 1948. Willingham was soon dropped; then Burns (my own favorite) sank and by 1949 in the aftermath of *The City and the Pillar* I too departed the O.K. list.

"I HAD the freak of luck to start high on the mountain, and go down sharp while others were passing me," so Mailer wrote, describing the time after *Barbary Shore* when he unexpectedly joined the rest of us down on the plain. Now the descent, swift or slow, is not agreeable; but on the other hand it is not as tragic as Mailer seems to find it. To be demoralized by the withdrawal of public success (a process as painful in America as the withdrawal of a drug from an addict), is, I think, to grant too easily a victory to the society one has attempted to criticize, affect, change, reform. It is clearly unreasonable to expect to be cherished by those one assaults. It is also childish, in the deepest sense of being a child, ever to expect justice. There is none beneath our moon. One can only hope not to be destroyed entirely by injustice and, to put it cynically, one can very often flourish through an injustice obtaining in one's favor. What matters finally is not the world's judgment of oneself but one's own judgment of the world. Any writer who lacks this final arrogance will not survive very long, especially in America.

That wide graveyard of still-born talents which contains so much of the brief ignoble history of American letters is a tribute to the power of a democracy to destroy its critics, brave fools and passionate men. If there is anything in Mailer's new book which alarms me, it is his obsession with public success. He is running for President, as he puts it. Yet though his best and most interesting works have been unjustly attacked, he should realize that in this most inequitable of worlds his one worldly success was not a very good book, that *The Naked and the Dead* is redolent of "ambition" (in the Mary McCarthy sense of the word — pejorative, needless to say) and a young man's will to be noticed. Mailer himself nearly takes this view: "I may as well confess that by December 8th or 9th of 1941 . . . I was worrying darkly whether it would be more likely that a great war novel would be written about Europe or the Pacific." Ambition and the day coincided and a success was made. Yet it is much less real a book than Burns's *The Gallery*, or even some of the stories of Robert Lowry, works which had the virtue of being felt, possessed entirely by the men who made them, not created out of a stern ambition and a dogged competence. But, parenthetically, most war books are inadequate. War tends to be too much for any writer, especially one whose personality is already half-obliterated by life in a democracy. Even the aristocrat Tolstoy, at a long remove in time, stretched his genius almost to a breaking point to encompass men and war and the thrust of history in a single vision. Ernest Hemingway in *A Farewell to Arms* did a few nice descriptions, but his book, too, is a work of ambition, in which can be seen the beginning of the careful, artful, immaculate idiocy of tone that since has marked both his prose and his legend as he has declined into that sort of fame which, at moments I hope are weak, Mailer seems to crave.

But it is hard for American writers

GORE VIDAL is both novelist and stage and television dramatist. He is now completing a play for production next fall.

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not to measure themselves according to the standards of their time and place. I recall a conversation with Stephen Spender when I lapsed, unconsciously, into the national preoccupation: some writer had unexpectedly failed, not gone on, blown up. And Spender said rather pointedly, "The difference in England is that they want us only to be distinguished, to be good." We order things differently; although our example is contagious: recently, the popular British press has discovered writers in a way ours never has. Outside the gossip column and the book page no writer except Hemingway is ever mentioned as news in the American press, but let the latest young English novelist attack the Establishment and there are headlines in London. Mailer can denounce Eisenhower as much as he likes in *Dissent* but the readers of the *Daily News* will never know the name of Mailer, much less the quality of his anger. Publicity for the American writer is of the personality kind: a photograph in *Harper's Bazaar,* bland television appearances . . . the writer is a minor movie star, and as unheeded.

MAILER and I finally met in 1954. I had just published my last, or perhaps I should say latest, novel *Messiah* and it had sunk quietly into oblivion in America (if it were not for the continuing interest of Europe, especially England, a great many of our writers would not survive the various seasons of neglect). I liked Mailer, though I am afraid my first impression of him was somewhat guarded: I am suspicious of people who make speeches at me. And he is a born party-orator. I have not the slightest recollection what we talked about. I do recall telling him that I admired *Barbary Shore,* and he was shrewd enough to observe that probably I had been driven to read it to see if it was really as bad as everyone thought. Which it was not. Of his three novels I find it the most interesting, the least diffuse and, quite literally, memorable. It is hallucinatory writing of a kind Mailer has only tried, as far as I know, that one time; and though I think his talents are essentially naturalistic, he does seem again in his new novel (judging from the advance samples he offers in *Advertisements*) to be trying for that revelation through willful distortion that he achieved in *Barbary Shore.* One is curious to see the result.

I have gone into the chronology of Mailer's days and mine because they run parallel, occasionally crossing, and because the book he has just published is, in effect, an autobiography covering more or less his entire career with particular attention to the days of the Golfer's dull terror. Mailer gives us his life and his work together and therefore it is impossible to review the book without attempting to make some estimate of both his character and the corpus of his work, the tension of his present and the shape of his future. Mailer is sly to get himself all this attention, but I must point out that it is a very dangerous move to expose oneself so completely. Indeed, in other times it would have been fatal for an artist not yet full grown to show us his sores and wounds, his real and his illusory strength. Until very recently the artist was a magician who did his magic in public view but kept himself and his effects a matter of mystery. We know *now* of Flaubert's suffering, both emotional and aesthetic, during the days of his work, but it is hard to imagine what would have happened if the court which prosecuted *Madame Bovary* had had as evidence a volume of his letters. In effect, Mailer has anticipated his own posterity. He is giving us now the storms and the uncertainties, private and public, which he has undergone. He has armed the enemy and not entirely pleased his allies.

However, it may be possible to get away with this sort of thing today, for we live in the age of the confession. What Mailer has done is no different in kind than what those deranged and fallen actresses have accomplished in ghost-written memoirs where, with a shrewd eye on the comeback trail, they pathetically confess their sins to Demos, receiving for their tears the absolution of a culture obscenely interested in gossip. I suspect Mailer may create more interest in himself by having made this "clean breast of it" than he would have got by publishing a really distinguished novel. The audience no longer consumes novels, but it does devour personalities. Yet, what happens after one is eaten? Is one regurgitated? Or does the audience move on to its next dinner of scandal and tears, its previous meal assimilated?

But I am fairly certain that Mailer will survive everything. Despite a nice but small gift for self-destruction, he is uncommonly adroit, with an eye to the main chance (the writer who has not this instinct is done for in America; excellence is not enough). I noted with some amusement that, despite the air of candor, he makes no new enemies in this book. He scores off those who are lost to him anyway, thus proving that essentially the work is politic. His confessions, when not too disingenuous, are often engaging, and always interesting as he tries to record his confusions. For Mailer, simply, does not begin to know what he believes or is or wants. His drive seems to be toward power of a religio-political kind. He is a messiah without real hope of paradise on earth or in heaven and with no precise mission except that dictated by his ever-changing temperament. I am not sure, finally, that he should be a novelist at all, or even a writer, despite formidable gifts. He is too much a demagogue; he swings from one position of cant to another with an intensity that is visceral rather than intellectual. He is all fragments and pieces. He appears to be looking for an identity and often it seems that he believes crude celebrity will give it him again. The author of *The Naked and the Dead,* though not the real Mailer, was at least an identifiable surrogate, and duly celebrated. But Mailer was quickly bored with the war-novelist role and, as soon as possible, he moved honorably to a new position: radical politics, in the hope that through Marxist action he might better identify himself to us and to himself. But that failed him, too. Nor is the new Mailer, prophet of Hip and celebrator of sex and its connection with time, apt to interest him or us for very long.

I also noted at moments toward the end of this book that a reaction was setting in: Mailer started using military allusions. "Back in the Philippines, we . . . ," that sort of thing. And there were references to patrols, ambushes. It was startling. Most of our generation was in the war, usually ingloriously, yet I have never heard a contemporary make any reference to it in a military way. The war to most of us was a profound irrelevance; traumatic for some, perhaps, but for most no more than an interruption. When the 1959 Mailer reminds us that he was a rifleman on Luzon, I get embarrassed for him and hope he is not going back to his first attitude to get the attention he wants.

NOW for the book itself. It is a collection of stories, essays, notes, newspaper columns and part of a play. It begins with his first story at Harvard and ends with part of his new novel. The play, which I read in an earlier version, could be remarkable on stage. But the best work in this volume is two short stories. "The Language of Men" tells of the problems of an army cook who has an abstract passion for excellence as well as a need for the approbation of the indifferent men who eat his food. His war with them and himself and his passion to be good is beautifully got and in many ways one of the best stories of

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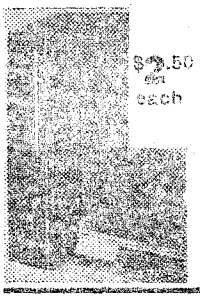
its kind I have read, certainly preferable to Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, which it resembles in theme. But where Hemingway, as usual, was pretentious and external, Mailer is particular and works from within his characters with gentle grace. The other story, *The Patron Saint of McDougall Alley*, is a wildly funny portrait of an archetypal drifter and I think it is of permanent value: we have had this sort of fool in every age (Catullus and Juvenal each dealt with him) but I have not seen him done quite so well in our day.

By and large, excepting "The White Negro," I did not like the essays and the newspaper columns. Mailer is forever shouting at us that he is about to tell us something we must know or has just told us something revelatory and we failed to hear him or that he will, God grant his poor abused brain and body just one more chance, get through to us so that we will *know*. Actually, when he does approach a point he shifts into a swelling, throbbing rhetoric which is not easy to read but usually has something to do with love and sex and the horror of our time and the connection which must be made between time and sex (the image this bit of rhetoric suggests to me is a limitless gray sea of time with a human phallus desperately poking at a corner of it). He is at his best (who is not?) when discussing his own works and days. The piece about getting *The Deer Park* published is particularly good, and depressing for what it reveals about our society. But, finally, in every line he writes, despite the bombast, there is uncertainty: who am I? what do I want? what am I saying? He is Thomas Wolfe but with a conscience. Wolfe's motive for writing was perfectly clear: he wanted fame; he wanted to taste the whole earth, to name all the rivers. Mailer has the same passion for fame but he has a good deal more sense of responsibility and he sees that the thing is always in danger of spinning down into meaninglessness. Nothing is quite enough: art, sex, politics, drugs, god, mind. He is sure to get tired of Hip very soon. Sex will be a dead end for him because sex is the one purely existential act. Sex is. There is nothing more to be done about it. Sex builds no roads, writes no novels, and sex certainly gives no meaning to anything in life but itself. I have often thought that much of D. H. Lawrence's self-lacerating hysteria toward the end of his life must have come out of some "blood knowledge" that the cruel priapic god was mad, bad and dangerous to know and, finally, not even palliative to the universal estrangement.

PERHAPS what has gone wrong in Mailer, and in many of our fellow clerks, is the sense that human beings to flourish must be possessed by one idea, a central meaning to which all experience can be related. To be, in Isaiah Berlin's bright metaphor, hedgehog rather than fox. Yet the human mind is not capable of this kind of exclusivity. We are none of us hedgehogs or foxes, but both simultaneously. The human mind is in continual flux and personality is simply a sum of those attitudes which most often repeat themselves in recognizable actions. It is naive and dangerous to try to impose on the human mind any system of thought which lays claim to finality. Very few first-rate writers have ever subordinated their own apprehension of a most protean reality to a man-made system of thought. Tolstoy's famous attempt, in *War and Peace*, nearly wrecked that beautiful work. Ultimately, not Christ, not Marx, not Freud, despite the pretensions of each, has the final word to say about the fact of being human. And those who take solemnly the words of other men as absolute are, in the deepest sense, maiming their own sensibility and contraverting the evidence of their own senses in a fashion which may be comforting to a terrified man but is disastrous for an artist.

One of the few sad results of the collapse of the Judeo-Christian ethical and religious systems has been the displacement of those who are absolutists by temperament and would in earlier times have been rabbis, priests, systematic philosophers. As the old establishment of the West crumbles, the absolutists have turned to literature and the arts, and one by one the arts in the twentieth century have become hieratic. Serious literature has become religion, as Matthew Arnold foresaw. Those who once would have been fulfilled in Talmudic debates or suffered finely between the pull of Rome and the Church of England have turned to the writing of novels, and worse, to the criticism of novels. Now I am not sure that the novel, though it is many things and perhaps as Lawrence said: "the one bright book of life," is particularly suited to didacticism. It is certainly putting an undesirable weight upon the novel to use it as a pretext for sermons or the resuscitation of antique religious myths. Works of fiction, at best, create not arguments but worlds, and a world by definition is an attitude toward a complex of experience, not a single argument or theme, syllogistically proposed. In the nineteenth century most of our critics (and many of our novelists) would have been writing books of sermons and quar-



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reling over points of doctrine. With religion gone out of the intellectual world they now write solemnly and uneasily about novels; they are clearly impatient with the vulgar life of the better novels and were it not that they had one another's books about books to analyze, I suspect many of them would despair and falter. The novelists don't seem very bright to the critics and their commentaries seem irrelevant to the novelist. Yet each affects the other; and those writers who are unduly eager for fame and acceptance will write novels which they hope might interest religious-minded critics. The results range from the sub-literary bleating of the Beats to Mailer's portentous: "I am the way and the life ever after, crucify me, you hackers, for mine is a ritual death! Oh, Scott, oh, Herman, oh, ancestral voices murmuring, take my flesh and my blood, partake of me and *know* mysteries!" And the curious thing is that they *will* crucify him; they will partake of his flesh; yet no mystery will be revealed. For the priests have created the gods, and they are all of them ritual harvest gods.

I WAS most struck by this remark of André Gide in the posthumous *Ainsi Soit-il*: "It is affectation that makes so many of today's writings, often even the best among them, unbearable to me. The author takes on a tone that is not natural to him." Of course it is sometimes the work of a lifetime for an artist to discover who he is and it is true that a great deal of good art results from the trying on of masks, the affectation of a *persona* not one's own. But it seems to me that most of my contemporaries, including Mailer, are — as Gide suggests — desperately trying to convince themselves and the audience that they are something other than they are. There is even a certain embarrassment about writing novels at all. Telling stories does seem a silly occupation for one fully grown; yet to be a philosopher or a religious is not easy when one is making a novel. Also, in a society such as ours, where there is no moral, political or religious center, the temptation to fill the void is irresistible. There is the empty throne so . . . *seize* the crown. Who would not be a king or high priest in such an age? And the writers, each in his own way, are preoccupied with power. Some hope to achieve place through good deportment. Universities are filled with poets and novelists conducting demure and careful lives in imitation of Eliot and Forster and others who through what *seems* to have been discretion, made it. Outside the universities one finds the buccaneers who mean to seize the crown by force, blunt Bolinbrokes to the Academy's gentle Richards.

Mailer is a Bolinbroker, a born usurper. He will raise an army anywhere, live off the country as best he can, helped by a devoted underground, even assisted at brief moments by rival claimants like myself. Yet when all is said, none of this is the way to live. And it is not a way — a least it makes the way harder — to make a literature, which, no doubt quixotically, remains the interest of each of us. I suppose if it helps Hemingway to think of literature as a Golden Gloves Tournament with himself pounding Maupassant to the mat or fighting Tolstoy to a draw, then no doubt the fantasy has been of some use. But there is also evidence that the preoccupation with power is a great waste of time. And Mailer has had the honesty to confess that his own competitiveness has wasted him as he worries about reviewers and bad publicity and the seemingly spiteful successes of other novelists. Yet all the time he knows perfectly well that writers are not in competition with one another. The real enemy is the audience which grows more and more indifferent to literature, an audience which now can be reached only by phenomena, by superior pornographies or meretriciously detailed accounts of the way we live now. No serious American novelist has ever had any real sense of audience. C. P. Snow made the point that he would, given a choice, prefer to be a writer in England to a writer in America because, for better or worse, the Establishment of his country would read him and know him as he knew them, as the Greek dramatists knew and were known by the City's audience. One cannot imagine the American President — any American President — reading a work by a serious contemporary American writer. This lack of response is to me at the center of Mailer's desperation. He is a public writer, not a private artist; he wants to influence those who are alive at this time, but they will not notice him even when he is good. So each time he speaks he must become more bold, more loud, put on brighter motley and shake more foolish bells — *anything* to get their attention and, finally (and this could be his tragedy), so much energy is spent in getting the indifferent ear to listen that when the time comes for him to speak there may be not enough strength or creative imagination left him to say what he *knows*; exhausted, he becomes like Louis Lambert in Balzac's curious novel of the visionary-artist who, having seen straight through to the heart of the mystery, dies mad, murmuring: "The angels are white."

Yet of all my contemporaries I retain the greatest affection for Mailer as a force and as an artist. He is a man whose faults, though many, add to rather than subtract from the sum of his natural achievement. There is more virtue in his failures than in most of those small premeditated successes which, in Cynic's phrase, "debase currency." Mailer in all that he does, whether he does it well or ill, is honorable, and that is the highest praise I can give any writer in this piping time.

The Pleasures of Business

THE WORLD OF THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. Edited by Charles Preston. Simon & Schuster. 485 pp. $6.50.

Edward W. Ziegler

BUSINESS began as a reaction to boredom. Although an invention of distraction, it has now grown so important that most of this nation heartily endorses its ethic as our *raison d'etre.* Conventional American judgment rejects any suggestion that there is something radically amiss in our headlong pursuit of profit. Still there are those who can only exclaim at the unprecedented frivolity of it all. For business, say what you will, remains a means—to an end that Americans prefer to leave ill-defined.

Minute, ethereal and fleeting hints that *The Wall Street Journal* may entertain similar thoughts make that paper a fascinating organ. Or perhaps one sees in it what one yearns to see. The bulk of the evidence points the other way: the loving, tender—even sentimental—vignettes of American businessmen and consumers impelling their persons, their talents, their hopes and their capital with frightening constancy toward some transitory and probably worthless goal.

The newcomer to the *Journal,* or to this anthology from its pages, cannot expect the paper to be predictable ex-

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cept in these particulars: It makes business look like pleasure, it is against big government, big taxes and big labor; it is for the Individual—particularly if he pays his bills; it is for Eggheads; and it is for the simpler life of the farm (particularly if it is a farm that refuses government subsidy). It is also for business (big, small, or indeterminate) and capital.

In its daily version as well as in this anthology the *Journal* is a tightly edited paper. The genre of its "leader" story is such that it cannot be mistaken. Often it will begin in this fashion:

> As a young man on his way up, Larry C. had his problems. He has just been promoted to assistant personnel director of a major food processing company, but the job entails some basic decisions. There's the matter of a car. "I'm not ashamed to ride my boss around in the old beat-up car; I refuse to build my whole life around the company. . . ."

This sounds like the real story of actual people; a high-class *Look* formula. But there is a difference: The *Journal's* mission is to inform, educate, clarify; and, on its own level, it succeeds admirably. Certainly there is no better-mannered style in the mass media. The paper is polite, its aim is high and it vents its opinions with excellent vigor and humor.

Yet one cannot finish an issue—or this anthology—without a feeling of mental malnutrition. For the *Journal's* genius is in going only so deep—in developing a subject in details but in begging the fundamentals. Hence one is treated to a glittering, sometimes brilliant, series of essays on first-rate trivia (as opposed to the big-slicks' and tabloids' second- or third-rate trivia). Nevertheless there is much to applaud in even this degree of profundity. The fact that 600,000 Americans pay for its reasonably serious reading matter (and that a probable 1,200,000 others read behind these subscribers) makes the *Journal* an enduring minority report to the mass opinion of television, the cloacal press and all the others who estrange us from reality.

The essays on personal economy and the myriad Mr. G.'s, J.'s, C.'s, O.'s and W.'s, are less sparkling when put in a book than when brightening an otherwise all-business front page. There is an ineffable dreariness about the people the *Journal* writes about when one meets them seriatim. They seem to be dullards whose every thought is of consumption. The American, as here chronicled, is one of the great bores of Western Civilization. Unhappily, though he may be specifically fictitious, he is generally authentic.

> I'm paying so much on the house, the car, insurance and interest on the loans, I just can't seem to put anything aside. . . .
>
> I suppose if I were willing to take a chance I could be making $3,000 or $4,000 a year more, but I can't afford to gamble. We're on a tight budget, and the money has to keep rolling in. . . .
>
> When a fellow is in my income bracket, he automatically goes into the oil business. . . .
>
> I hope to be married; I'm going to business school instead of college, and I'd like my husband to be making $200 to $250 a week, and I'd like to live about 40 miles out of the city.

ONE article that is certain to have stopped three-fourths of the readers started with this dead-pan observation: "Top executives are finding it tougher and tougher to get fired these days. Some do, of course. . . ." The piece goes on to explain that there is an apparent hesitancy in industry to cashier the top brass. This is unquestionably true, but probably not for the reasons the writer assigns: an inferior man at hand is better than no man at all because ". . . Men with executive ability are hard to find." The evidence is growing that the corporation has creeping paralysis. It cannot admit a mistake; it is deathly afraid of adverse reaction if it should, in effect, admit a mistake by firing a top executive. Consequently, spectacular departures are rare. Coincident with this progressive corporate ossification has been the growth of the consultant. This is dealt with in another *Journal* essay on "Throat Cutting." The suspicion is growing that only a consultant can break a corporate log-jam. He comes in as nobody's man, ostensibly, and in many instances (notably, Westinghouse's Mark Cresap) he stays to assume top rank.

The problem initially arises because the team-play concept makes it extremely difficult to assign proper blame for incompetence. At the same time, a high-salaried man who has reached a "safe" level tends to sink down in his foxhole. Often he simply can't be found when the shooting begins.

Not the least of the *Journal's* accomplishments has been a general and widespread elevation of the standards of business journalism. It has challenged most of the oldest doctrines of trade journalism. For one thing it has been brave. It secured some detailed data on General Motors cars a few years ago in advance of the time G.M. wanted the information released. Unperturbed, the *Journal* ran its information. General Motors retaliated by yanking its advertising. The *Journal* remained unruffled. A reported meeting between ranking Dow-Jones (which publishes the paper) and G.M. executives ironed out the differences shortly thereafter. The message was clear to the business press: Courage pays.

A second icon shattered at 44 Broad Street is that businessmen don't understand or want humor. The *Journal* has one of the wittiest airs of any newspaper—general or specialized. Although

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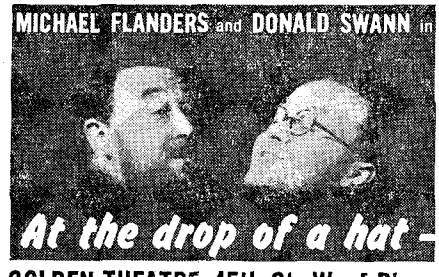

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not included in this anthology, one of the more amusing editorials appeared about a year ago. The *Journal* listed Uncle Sam's expenditures for foreign aid, domestic farm subsidies and various public-works projects. Then it asked, "Now, Virginia, what was that question again?"

The minute hints of disillusion alluded to above took their most tangible form in an essay, "Keats and the Beats," that appeared in late 1958. In a close discussion of Jack Kerouac's *Dharma Bums,* the paper was high in its praise of Kerouac and strangely sympathetic to one of his heroes, Japhy Ryder. The concluding paragraph is astounding:

> It is not hard to picture Japhy in a few years. He'll live in Palo Alto or Winnetka or Westport. He'll be an account executive or a book editor with a too-expensive family, a white Jaguar, a collection of Maxwell Bodenheim poems, a Hammond organ, a hi-fi set and a mild delusion he is somehow shaping the future of the world. Then, and only then, will he be really beat.

The *Journal* has thrown a fright into the daily newspapers by its octupine operation (printing simultaneously in New York, Washington, Dallas, Chicago and San Francisco). It is one paper that has finally skirted the trap of "news." Its front-page "leaders" could not possibly be dated by the events of a single day. In quality, they approach fiction. It is living testimony that the newspaper as we know it is obsolescent.

But for all its majesty the *Journal* is infuriating. It repines editorially for the simpler day when there was no big government, big taxes, big labor, or groupthink. It wants a speedy return to the primitive state for all such. But big business? Or big business newspapers? Things will work out—if the government will just leave them alone.

ARCHITECTURE

Walter McQuade

A MONTH OR TWO AGO, on a sunny, summery fall day, I had lunch at the Hotel Plaza in New York with one of the best of Japan's architects, Kenzo Tange, his wife and some other friends. The Plaza, designed a half-century ago by Henry J. Hardenbergh in Hohenzollern style—in which every nuance was made a complete gesture—attracts this kind of visiting firemen's lunch, I suppose, because Frank Lloyd Wright liked the building, and now people remember, pleasantly, having lunch there with him and getting the dogtrot tour of the place.

After lunch we walked down Fifth Avenue, pausing at 54th Street to peer west toward the chaste backyard wall of the Museum of Modern Art, over which you could see the plastic-roofed dome of the bare, spiney, cantilevered truss of the current outdoor exhibition devoted to R. Buckminster Fuller, the inventor and builder. The structures looked good in the sunlight. The gold framework of the truss glinted optimistically; the geodesic dome, clad in putty-colored plastic, bulged buoyantly above the decorous gray brick wall. And farther down the sidewalk, facing us under one of the little trees planted in the sidewalk, stood Fuller himself with two of his lieutenants, pointing up the wall at the truss, and then gesturing. Even from the corner, his motions were easy to understand. He was suggesting that they extend the endless truss out above the wall and over 54th Street. Why not?

Fuller's ambition is to cover everything with a light, cheap, industrially produced spider web of metal and plastic, to go on endlessly, abundantly, almost weightlessly. Man needs shelter, and Fuller thinks it should be abundant. Recently his progress has been considerable, but it first took years and years of pamphleteering. He has spent most of his lifetime promoting industrial solutions so imaginative that they threatened to bankrupt the industries concerned. He had a three-wheeled automobile, a house hung from a mast to eliminate foundations, a bathroom pressed in a single piece of porcelained steel, and many other visions. The automobile industry blinked, the house-builders smiled, the plumbers grunted and everyone refused to do anything about it.

But then he came up with the geodesic dome, a technique so simple its parts could be produced by cottage industry—at most, in any machine shop. All that needed to be manufactured were light metal struts and fairly simple connectors; he had worked out a pattern by which sets of them could be put together into wide-span roofing-walling systems to be skinned with tough plastic fabric. They made shelters with a weight-enclosure ratio that was sensational. (In a conventional steel-frame structure it probably takes fifty pounds of building materials to enclose each square foot of floor space; with the geodesic system you can shelter a square foot with less than a single pound of structure. This is important; you pay for structure, like steak, by the pound.) With the dome Fuller not only by-passed large industry; he succeeded in standing the design world on its ear, for the structure of the geodesic dome also has great visual strength, although appearances do not really interest Fuller. Aesthetically speaking, he would rather grow hybrid vegetables than flowers.

However, beauty is what he gets—delight—and this show proves it. The other two Fuller constructions included—the truss and a strange structure called a tensegrity mast—are even more alive, visually, than the dome.

The truss is also slightly less novel than the others. Essentially, it is made of many triangular struts built together in planes which are skeletally strong because each is braced, not only in width and length, but in depth also. For years this kind of Tinker-Toy structural framework has been sketched, talked about and even implied strongly by certain scaffolding systems and exhibition designs. But Fuller's contribution is major: the connector, that fist that grabs the clusters of struts at the point where they come together. This connector has always been the awkward link in the practicality of such a prefab system, and he may now have licked it.

BY FAR the most fascinating of the three constructions on display, and the most reticent technically, is the tensegrity mast, a magician's dream, technical yoga. It too is made of short struts and cables, and climbs up like a minor radio mast into the sky, cabled for security to the ground. Credited to Kenneth Snelson, a student with Fuller for several years, its form is a series of vertebrae held together in tension by tendons of steel. But it is also like a bracelet or necklace, unclasped, standing startlingly straight up, unsupported. It is shown as an example of "discontinuous compression," and I find this just as baffling to the eye as to the ear. If there is tension in a structure, there must be compression to balance it. Equilibrium demands it—mine, if not nature's. I'll admit only (and perhaps I am about to be outmoded) that Fuller has succeeded in localizing the compressive forces tremendously, to the point of concealing them, and thus produced a very delicate, very airy

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stack of interconnected kite frames. It is beautiful.

The whole show is, in fact, beautiful, one of the museum's really excellent displays on architecture, a subject that few other galleries in the world can tackle knowledgeably. No one could do more for these structures than display them full size, and the Modern has done it jauntily.

That sunny day on 54th Street, we accosted Fuller, and as always he was cheerful and charming. His head tilted back (he is not a tall man) he beams at you courteously from behind his formidable glasses, his eyes swimming largely, apprehending everything. His diction is wonderful, his voice like a shy, or civilized, radio announcer's, his conversation suggestive, his imagery in words as enticing as it is in structural design. We congratulated him on the show.

"Yes, isn't it good," he said. "And, you know, I really had very little to do with it. They put it all together. We just furnished what they requested, the parts, and you know, I didn't have to do anything." A man who has had to bolt many of his designs together with his own hands to prove to long rows of doubters that it could be done, he sounded somehow regretful, a little left out. But then he reflected, "Of course, that's what we've been driving toward, I guess."

THEATRE

Harold Clurman

UGO BETTI's *Time of Vengeance* (York Theatre) is a provocative play. I am not certain of its meaning. This is not necessarily a fault: I have never been entirely certain of what *Hamlet, Oedipus Rex, Rosmersholm* and a host of other world-famous plays mean. I am not suggesting that *Time of Vengeance* is in a class with any of these, I merely wish to point out that intellectual clarity is not the ultimate virtue in art, that in fact a certain elusiveness is characteristic of many masterpieces.

Time of Vengeance is, to begin with, mysterious in the manner of a detective story. I used to think of Pirandello's puzzles as a kind of mordant mystification in which cold calculation was compounded with hysteria, as if a mad logician had tried to turn a tragedy into a practical joke. But just as I realized after contact with certain Swedish novels, films, paintings that Strindberg's plays were not only an expression of his own strange genius but a manifestation of something in the Swedish character, so I am now beginning to suspect that Ugo Betti writes as he does not because he has been influenced by Pirandello but because they both reflect certain traits indigenous to the South Italian environment.

The reader may have seen a French motion picture called *Le Beau Serge* in which a young man from Paris returns to his native village to visit a former schoolmate whom he remembers as a nice fellow, but who has become ruined by the hate, drink, despair, moral indifference and self-destructive brutality that seem to pervade the whole miserable place. When the boy from Paris tries to remedy some of the more flagrant ills he witnesses, his unhappy friend comments, "But he doesn't really understand." What is not understood is that the village is deeply attached to its disease. It is, so to speak, unified and preserved by its pain as if it were a sacred tradition.

So in *Time of Vengeance* a tiny village calls in a police official from Rome to investigate a petty theft. But the villagers and the mayor who have summoned help also seem to fear and resent the presence of the person who has come in answer to their call. There exists in this village a combination of poverty, jovial loquacity, petty intrigue, duplicity, piety, parochial affability, lubricity and shame: qualities we recognize from many accounts of life in the small towns of Sicily and at the bottom of the Italian boot.

What is going on in Ugo Betti's village? A clerk in the mayor's office has a crippled daughter (the "goose") who craves tenderness but is shunned by everyone because of her deformity. The mayor, moved by pity and lewd desire, deflowers the girl. Her father pretends not to know this, for he commiserates with his daughter's loneliness. Other men in the town—themselves bedeviled by hopelessness or meanness—follow the mayor to the girl's bed. The wretchedly poor clerk profits from the situation; he steals from the girl's complacent "lovers." The appeal to Rome for police intervention is the townsfolk's effort to cleanse themselves of the abscess they have created. Yet they fear any change in their condition: they live through their sin. For despite its degradation it represents pity, passion, the sharing of a common secret and hunger for expiation.

Evil as a means to satisfy a need for good of which the ordinary besmirched mortal does not seem capable is the central theme of the play. It is not a social study — though it has social implications — it is more than a naturalistic report. It has religious implications and it symbolizes far more than its surface story or locale. It is not moralistic; it does not preach. It is a parable and possibly a poem without strict definition. The play penetrates one's conscience and troubles it.

The production is unusually aware. If it does not possess all the authentic color it needs — the homely plausibility that lends so much conviction to the best Italian films — it has at least a sense of what such color is supposed to reveal. The cast is a sensitive one — particularly Lou Gilbert as the clerk, Sy Travers as the mayor and Merriman Gatch as the victimized girl. The direction by David Metcalf admirably brings out the human significance.

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FILMS

Robert Hatch

I HAVE seen a good many hortatory films and, more specifically, I understand how Stanley Kramer operates. So I went to *On the Beach* thinking I knew pretty well what to expect. In a sense I was right, but I had quite failed to estimate the force of horror and pity — and terror — that Kramer would evoke with his hallucinatory realism.

The picture follows Nevil Shute's novel in faithful detail but, strangely enough, it is small protection to have read the book. Because Shute's weakness is that his characters and situations are a little too glib to be credible, and it is one of Kramer's major talents that he can take contrived material and throw a glare of commanding veracity over it. In this case he asked one thing of his cast as they took on the assignment of showing how a small group of people in Brisbane waited for and succumbed to the radiation sweeping down from the last war of the great powers: he asked them to be intensely alive. That they are, and it is indescribably awful to watch people so wholesomely delighting in their good, ingenious bodies when you know — and I swear you *do* know — that they are living out the last few weeks of the human experience. Actually, I am not certain that Gregory Peck, Ava Gardner, Fred Astaire, Anthony Perkins and Donna Anderson are vital beyond their normal gifts: Kramer photographs them with a sensuous appreciation of flesh that makes them shine.

Kramer works his effects very deliberately. It is, for example, a blatant trick when he throws a good, strong voice over a drunken quartet singing "Waltzing Matilda" at the line which goes: "'You'll never catch me alive,' said he." Some of the dialogue — particularly the love dialogue — rings with the clunk of false coin, and I am sorry that Anthony Perkins was asked to play a husband, even a very young husband: he is immature beyond his years and his attempts to sustain a woman in anguish look embarrassingly like masquerade. He is much better when he is on duty as the Australian naval lieutenant.

You might, in short, call this film poster work, not art. But poster painters, when their hearts are in it, do know how to get an idea across. Of actual horror there is very little. Too little, I suppose, for though Mr. Shute's vision of the future is grim, his expectations of human behavior are optimistic to the point of fantasy. We have had plague in our past and we know what happens when all hope is lost. Men do not go about muttering "bad show" and preparing for decorous death. They turn horribly mad. But Shute is not concerned with the pathology of despair; he is concerned to make extinction popularly vivid; and this *Woman's Day* approach to total extinction is probably what strikes home. There is one horrible passage — the running of the world's last automobile race, when car after car hurtles off the track in crashing flames, the drivers quite literally caring more about victory than life itself. The audience giggled as the drivers died — it is a way audiences have of cushioning shock.

And at the end — as the last flicker of life disappeared — the audience applauded. That is unusual movie-house behavior and I wondered what they were applauding. Had they "enjoyed" the picture or were they glad to be alive? If so, would they do anything to stay alive? That, I would suppose, is what Mr. Kramer now waits to see.

NO DOUBT a close student of the meanders in the adamant Stalin line could reconstruct the reasons why Part One of Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible* was released and Part Two so long suppressed (the two sections are now showing together in New York). However, to viewers more interested in movies than in the vagaries of ideology, the content and tone of the two segments will seem very similar. They were made at the same time, with basically the same cast and often the same sets. The two-part story is a hymn to a hero, and it therefore clashes against the old Soviet dictum that only the people can be heroic — or indeed display any will or personality — which long made life difficult for Russian story-tellers. But *Ivan* was filmed as World War II was about to break; it is a patriotic rite of the sort all nations observe when they are about to gamble with destiny in the field. How Eisenstein intended to resolve his drama can never really be known, for he died before he could begin the projected Part III. As it is, the saga breaks off in mid-breath, with the insistent question—where should power reside?—frozen at a pitch of suspense.

It is perhaps a measure of both the stature and the limitation of *Ivan the Terrible* that one is vividly aware that it is not Shakespeare. The situation is Shakespearean — the legendary Tsar, with a vision of national grandeur, uses the peasants to beat into subjection the boyars (the great barons), who are armed with tradition, endlessly resourceful for intrigue and bloated with privilege. It is Elizabethan, surely, to assume that the ancient affairs of state are proper entertainment for the populace. But however heavily Shakespeare leaned on Holinshead for plot, his characters were his contemporaries, men of steely suppleness, complex and unpredictable.

Eisenstein's antagonists, by contrast, are true figures from tapestry, brilliantly vivid but flat. His tone is operatic, or better — since Prokofieff's music never comes on stage to control the action — it recalls a masque for gigantic marionettes. The figures move with the bravura sweep of noble dolls on strings and the illusion is intensified by the architecture of Eisenstein's interiors, which is low-arched and so achingly heavy as to bear down even on the necks of the audience. At critical moments, Eisenstein manages his lights and camera so that enormous shadows of the actors usurp the attention, and the flow of the picture (except for two great moments of spectacle, it never escapes into the air) is that of a black river pouring through endless caverns.

How all this affected the Russians as they prepared once more to throw back a mad conqueror I do not know. I should suppose that it made them proud of their high heritage, but somewhat uneasy as to their own fates when the jaws of power snapped shut. To one less closely involved in the allegory of Ivan's myth, the picture seems to turn history into a lava flow — slow, majestic, inevitable and incalculably destructive. This last effect, to be sure, could be caused by the fact that the plan was never completed. In the parts we have, Ivan is a mill grinding the opposition — how he would have built the future, indeed, whether it would have been given him to build the future, belongs to the section of the film that was never made. Toward the end of Part II, there is a scene in which Ivan, bitter and exhausted, dresses his idiot nephew, claimant to the throne by virtue of his mother's passionate ambition, in the trapping of Tsardom and sends him into the cathedral to meet the assassin's knife. There is a wickedly feline wit about this stroke of justice; it fulfills the Tsar's oath that he will never lift hand against his own blood, but it has the taint of mad maneuvering that Richard III would have relished. This episode might foreshadow a new, more humanly responsive quality in the matter to come; but, as far as we have it, *Ivan the Terrible* is not a story of men a little like gods, but of personified blind powers of nature. Powers, indeed, very like what awaited those mortally unhistorical Germans who were about to move in from the West.

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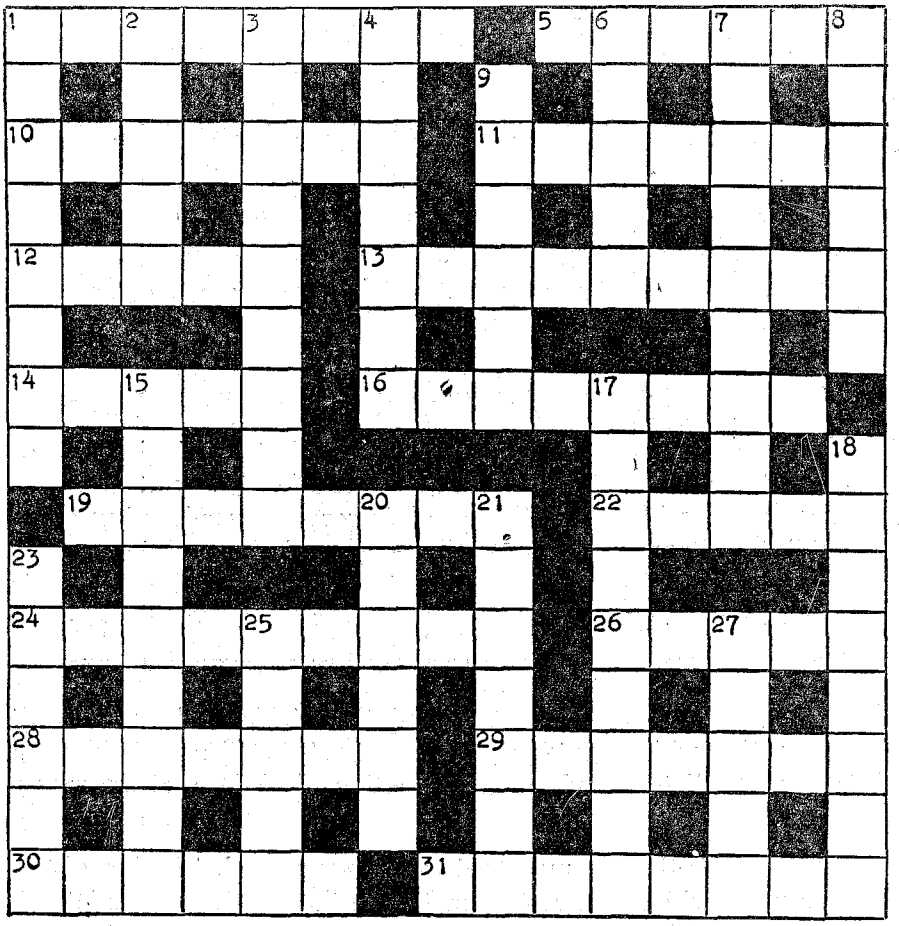
Crossword Puzzle No. 848

By FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS:

1 and 26 Equivalent to holding the King and Queen of trumps? (5, 3, 5)
5 One would expect a following if this might be grooved. (6)
10 Powerful literary hero returns with a lot inside the same way. (7)
11 Act employing plunging into water.
12 Is Ben responsible for 9 and 6? (5)
13 Don't attach so much importance!
14 Theatre of the Kildare narrative.
16 What grandma put up is no longer quiet, but they might give support.
19 Might be sent when a sort of jacket gets old. (8)
22 Circuits might be run together this way. (5)
24 Tom on horseback, or another animal? (9)
26 See 1 across.
28 Are climbers put in condition this way? (7)
29 The one called 30 gets fat as a philosopher. (7)
30 The son of the head of 29 was. (6)
31 Rather more this than a hot line?

DOWN:

1 Crazy get-up, but not quite all in the music! (8)
2 Do they bring out the character of the first part of the first book? (5)
3 Means rain, according to the country people. (9)
4 Undercover man without remand, in a way. (7)
7 The way the lip senses an oyster should be. (9)
8 Burke sai dthe Rights of Man was a this of anarchy. (6)
9 and 6 Where a guy goes to pick up a date (for the musical show or the serious play?) (1, 5, 5)
15 Watches the following cause of headache? (9)
17 A careful gentleman has such a splendid quality! (9)
18 Makes a minister finish with some hesitation, when not part of the original offering. (8)
20 Is the drug so bad as to take care of rattlers? (6)
21 Leaders belonging to a Greek city's uprising. (7)
23 Suppress drink! (6)
25 Could they be aliases when one is on the mount? (5)
27 A custom from 1776 to the present?

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 847

ACROSS: 1 True bill; 5 Attack; 9 Parvenu; 10 Precede; 11 English; 12 Lobbies; 13 Toeing the mark; 15 Prepossessing; 21 Thereto; 22 Compeer; 23 Paddock; 24 Errands; 25 Sadism; 26 Eyesores. DOWN: 1 Tappet; 2 Upright; 3 Beeline; 4 Laughing stock; 6 Tremble; 7 America; 8 Keepsake; 10 Polite society; 14 Epitaphs; 16 Emended; 17 Onerous; 18 Immures; 19 Greener; 20 Trusts.

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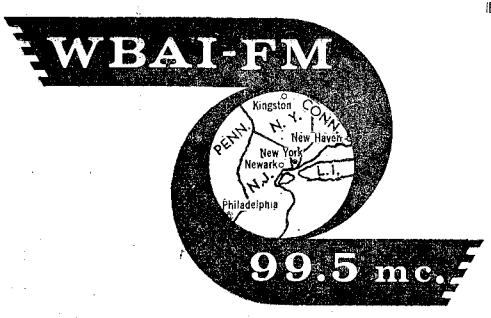

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